

November 1986

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CURRENT NOTES

The Newsletter For ATARI Owners



WAACE

ST LANGUAGES

DEGAS ELITE

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THE NEW ALADDIN

UNIVERSE II

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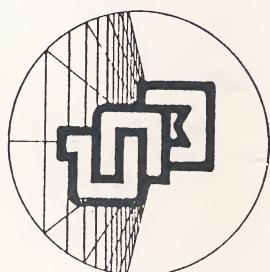
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The Managing Editor of CURRENT NOTES is Joe Waters, 122 N. Johnson Rd., Sterling, VA 22170 (703) 450-4761. Submissions of articles or advertising copy, subscription requests or back-issue orders should be sent to the editor. Deadline date for articles and advertisements is the 12th day of the preceding month. Submission of ST-related articles or ST products for review should be sent to the ST Editor, Frank Sommers, 4624 Langdrum Lane, Chevy Chase, MD 20815. Submissions of XE/XL-related articles or products for review should be sent to the XE Editor, Jack Holtzauer, 15017 Vista Drive, Dumfries, VA 22028.

EDITORIAL
 by Joe Waters

Well, here I am once more, done with everything except the Editorial. Let me use it to pass on some miscellaneous information. First of all, you may note that this issue is a little bit lighter than the previous two -- 60 pages this month instead of 68. I got the print bill for the last two issues and concluded we simply can't afford that page size at current cover and subscription rates. I have received many comments from people who do, indeed, want us to offer expanded coverage. Over the next month or so, we will take a hard look at current and projected costs over the coming year and try and set rates accordingly. We will try and pick a larger page size and hold that steady (plus or minus a few pages depending on advertising fluctuations) throughout the coming year. But even if costs were not a factor, remember, I am the one who has to edit and format each page to get it ready for the printer and I can assure you, a 68-page newsletter is considerably more work than our previous 48-page size. So, the final decision will be based both on monetary factors as well as work-load factors.

I expect CURRENT NOTES circulation to continue growing throughout the coming year. If we are holding our page size steady, growth in circulation can easily be accomplished without any changes in cover price or in subscription rates. While the total cost of producing the newsletter would, of course, increase, the number of people receiving the newsletter also increases and thus the average cost remains fairly steady, indeed, it can trend downward.

Speaking of costs and circulation, as some of you may know, CURRENT NOTES is mailed under second-class rates as a "Requestor's Publication". Second-class is MUCH cheaper than first-class. Issues that I have sent out this past month under first class have costs \$1.24 each just for the postage. By contrast, second-class rates are closer to \$0.15. To maintain our status as a requestor's publication, I must be able to show that people receiving CURRENT NOTES actually want to receive it (i.e. it is not just junk mail). If you are a subscriber, I have a copy of your check which serves as sufficient proof that you actually wanted the newsletter. If you are receiving CURRENT NOTES as a member of one of the local clubs, I do not have a copy of your check -- that was mailed to the club of your choice, not to CURRENT NOTES. We do have, in many cases, a signed and dated statement saying that you would like to receive CURRENT NOTES as a member of this or that club. Now you know the REAL reason behind the membership/subscription form which has appeared in each issue of CURRENT NOTES. Club members, look at your mailing label. On line one there is a six-digit code. The first two digits are your club abbreviation, the next three represent a membership number, and the last character, an "R" or an "N", indicates whether or not we have a Requestor's form on

file. If your label has an "N", we DO NOT have a form on file. Please fill out the subscription form from any issue of CURRENT NOTES (or just write a little note saying you want to receive the newsletter) and send that to Earl Lilley, 821 Ninoan Road S.E., Vienna, VA 22180. Be sure to SIGN and DATE the form. It will be good for THREE YEARS from the time you date it.

Well, enough of administrative things. What's going on this month? Why ATARIFEST that's what! This year's fair promises to be every bit as much fun as last year's. And, as a special treat, only half an hour ago, I received final confirmation that Data Pacific, Inc. would be coming to the 'fest. Who are they you say? Why 'they' are the creators of the MacCartridge (whoops), I mean the Magic Sac, that turns your Atari into a Mac. David Small, known for his many Atari articles, will be there demonstrating his cartridge. Of course, for this cartridge to work, you need to have the cartridge plus some Apple ROMS plus some programs. We are working on having ROMS available at the show and you can count on the CURRENT NOTES library adding at least four Mac public domain disks to its ST library. There are a couple other new technological marvels that I am hoping will be there, but since they are not confirmed yet, I can't tell you about them. You'll just have to come and see for yourself!

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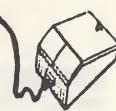
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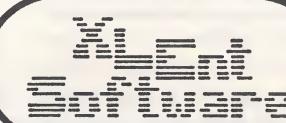
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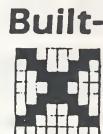
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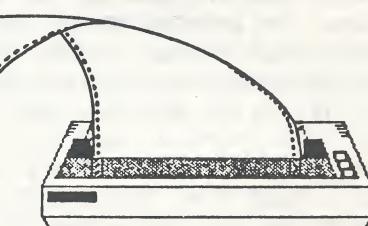
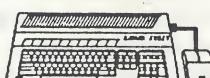
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• GEM BASED

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Joe,

My spouse talked me into buying her a new electronic typewriter. This is a Smith Corona DeVille 200 and seems to be a very nice daisy wheel type of machine. In looking it over I note that it has a nine-pin socket in the rear and will operate with a computer but the SM people are very stingy on giving out any information. I wonder if any one of the group might be able to give me some idea how to cable this to my 850 Interface.

To those people in the Current Notes family who are also amateur radio operators, I would like to call their attention to the fact that the old Atari Ad Astra has, like the Phoenix, rose from the ashes and is again viable. The net meets on Sunday at 1600 Zulu with Dave, KD7VA in Las Vegas as net control. Please check in if propagation allows.

Wm. R. Doctor
St. James City, FL

BASIC VIEW REVISITED

Dear Joe,

In my review of the Atari BASIC debugging tool, BASIC VIEW (in Current Notes, April 1986, page 21), I mentioned that this otherwise fine program had a problem handling certain kinds of program loops. More specifically, FOR-NEXT loops with more than one FOR statement on a program line, and GOSUB-RETURN loops in which the GOSUB statement was followed by another statement on the same line, would throw BASIC VIEW's attempt to step through a BASIC program into an endless loop.

I am glad to note that BASIC VIEW Issue 1.2 does not contain these flaws. This version also corrects the problem involving redefined character sets that Charles Jackson pointed out in his August 1986 Antic review. That appears to cover all of the bugs reported in published reviews of the program.

Consistent with what seems to be standard industry practice, nowadays, the publisher does not notify purchasers of the availability of corrected versions. You are on your own to learn about the new version and specifically request a copy (but I suppose that there is an economic limit to the support that can be provided for a \$20 piece of software). Once requested, however, Software Concepts will very quickly furnish registered purchasers with a free copy of the new version; they don't even require your old copy in exchange.

Finally, I'd like to reiterate my opinion that BASIC VIEW is a commendable piece of programming, and probably the most useful debugging (and learning) aid available for Atari BASIC.

Dave Shonyo
Annandale, VA

YOU'LL DO IT YOURSELF?

Dear Joe,

As promised, here are the notes and observations that I have made over the past few months on the current state of Atari computers and how they wind up in a service shop. This story is not about the computer that gives up for whatever reason, and its owner brings it into the shop for repair. This story relates some of the case histories of some of the computers that wind up in the shop for "other reasons!"

For example, The Atari 520ST is a very well designed machine. The motherboard is very clean and, for most users, will not give them much difficulties over the coming years. However, many people apparently find the insides of their 520 very appealing, and they have read many articles on how to make their 520's even better! So, their first project for many was the installation of an additional 512K of RAM to give their machines 1 megabyte of memory. The first thing they do is remove the cover, then the keyboard, then some hit the first obstacle, some of the metal shields are soldered closed! I have seen computers with their shields bent, broken, some twisted into shapes that they never were intended to be, and some unsoldered properly. Now, once that obstacle is out of the way come the real fun, installing the additional memory! The next few paragraphs will outline some of the "upgrades" we have come across:

Following an article downloaded from CompuServe, one customer gave his 3-day old computer to his buddy because his friend told him that he would install the ram chips for him and only charge him for the chips! At least the customer was able to use his computer for 3 days because it was unusable after that! Several trace lines were cut, (they were cut according to the article), the MMU chip was apparently over-heated and ruined, there were several solder bridges among the ram chips, and countless ram chips were also ruined. At least his friend did not charge him for the chips!

Another customer tried to upgrade his own machine. However, what he did not take into consideration was that his original ram chips had metal covers! That is not a mis-spelling, METAL covers! As soon as he connected his upgrade piggy-back style, his entire board around his ram was shorted out! Oh well, live and learn I guess.

Before I go on much further, Joe, I want you to know two things. First, that it is not only ST's that have owners attempting upgrades or "modifications", 130XE's and 800XL's arrive almost every week with some sort of ailment. Second, in no way am I telling people that projects such as 1 meg upgrades should only be done in a service shop, nor am I saying that people outside a service shop cannot do the upgrades. What I am trying to say is that people have just spent a great deal of time

and money for the purchases of some of this equipment, and I hate to see them lose their investment just like that! People should know the abilities of the individuals who will work on their computers if they choose not to do so themselves. Ask the individual what experience they have soldering very small items together. If they only weld pipe, then they may not be for you. Ask a service shop if they will warranty their work for 30 or more days. If they say no, go somewhere else. If you do want to do the work yourself, but are unsure about something, ask someone knowledgeable. Before you attempt some "modification" to your equipment because of an interesting article you read or downloaded, see if anyone else has had any success performing the modification that you are going to attempt.

I could relate many other stories to you, people putting chips in the wrong way, forgetting to put them in at all, plugging 11.5V DC power supplies into 9.5V AC disk drives, and so on. If nothing else, I hope this letter "saves" at least one unit from a rather unceremonious and, for the owner, an embarrassing death. It's funny, a music lover will probably never open up a piece of stereo equipment when it breaks, but someone who can write three or four lines of BASIC code is suddenly "a computer expert" and will have their machine apart in a minute. It just doesn't make sense to me.

Scott Klein
Atari Service Technician
Bethesda, Maryland

A T A R I D O W N U N D E R

Dear Joe,

Herewith is our bank cheque for the ST disks which I spoke to you by phone.

I mentioned one reason we are looking particularly for ST animation demos. I guess the 'rest of the world' does not realize how bad we are here in Australia. A brief potted history may help.

Atari products were introduced in Australia by the distributor Futuretronics some 5 years ago. Unfortunately, they concentrated on the best-selling VCS2600 (which sold extremely well, and is still doing so). The computers (400 and 800) were, we believe, an embarrassment to them -- they just did not understand them. Prices were ridiculously high -- In fact when I first decided to buy Atari (800), it cost \$1,500 (16 or 32K). However some of us took the plunge and bought an unadvertised product. Software support was minimal and again prices high, especially against the C64 which was promoted well.

The introduction by Atari Inc. of the 600XL and 800XL forced prices down and we began to look to better times. It didn't happen here though. Poor marketing of the computer products and high prices meant the C64 beating it all over. The software importers did not bring in Atari software on the belief that there were not enough

consumers and that Atari owners were 'pirating'!

The takeover by Jack Tramiel was heartening over here. We believed a new era was about to begin. Alas, a few months later the distributor went into receivership with financial problems and closed down. Stores and dealers throughout the whole of our country were left with stocks of Atari products bought at high prices. They off-loaded them at ridiculously low prices and some people bought bargains (600XL for \$49 -- unheard of before). The Groups kept pushing the new Atari to appoint a new distributor. In the meantime, we kept hearing of the new breed of 16 biters coming. Well to cut the story short a bit -- It took Atari Corp 12 months to appoint a new distributor (because they didn't want the same thing happening again). This time it was Mobex P/L (distributors of Casio products -- again though they didn't understand computers). It has taken them around 9 months to organize a new set-up (costs admittedly are high here) and they have just formally and officially released the 520 and 1040ST (about 2 months ago) although various people were importing them in low quantities before.

So here we are up to now. The distributor is trying to get dealers to restock on Atari products. They believe that because the 16 bit is the top-of-the-shelf that they must first convince the dealers and then convince the public (who still think that Atari died when it lost the money before JT took over) that Atari is still alive and well and producing top products.

Well, dealers are taking to the ST OK -- but at this stage they do not want to talk about 8-bit products at all. They say they are well-served by Commodore (64 and 128D) and Amstrad (various models) which are competitively priced. The software importers stopped bringing in Atari software long, long ago and still will not handle 8-bit software for Atari. We are left to importing our own from the various dealers advertising in Antic and Analog. One store in Sydney is importing larger quantities for his customers and getting in trouble with the 'exclusive' distributors of that brand of software because they have the rights (even though they refuse to release any Atari 8-bit software). So that is one of our problems.

Commodore released the Amiga 1000 over here very early knowing that the ST was about to be released -- In fact, they were both out at the same time here (although many people had imported ST's before). Due to high costs in setting up here, the distributor had to price accordingly (?) and the 520 started off at \$1,995 Aust Mono. A series of adjustments took it down to \$1,695 (what we believe is a reasonable price) and then when the Aussie dollar 'fell', took it back up to \$1,895 Mono and \$2,395 RGB (1040 is \$2,695 Mono and \$2,995 RGB) where it now sits on the market. In contrast, if we were to convert your US price, the 520 would sell here for \$1,200 mono. However, Aust has some pretty steep charges with sales taxes and the like.

Commodore are heavily subsidising the price of the Amiga and have it on the market at \$2,495 (only \$100 more than

the 520ST Colour). As well they are giving away the 256K expansion module. With Commodore Aust's usual good marketing and established dealership, they are doing quite well thank you.

Amiga's graphics have captivated the public's attention even though there is a huge software selection here right now for the ST.

So that's the reason I would like to concentrate on the ST animation in demos etc. We must try to convince the public that the ST is every way as good as the Amiga (just BECAUSE we do not have that huge price difference that you do elsewhere in US and UK).

Us 8 bitters meanwhile are still waiting for the ST to succeed here so dealers will take on the XL/XE models (they don't want to get caught again). Its a long hard road, but we remain loyal to Atari and long for one day when the name will be spoken of widely here.

Well, Joe, that may give you some idea of what we have had to put up with -- Its not good here what with Commodore 'dumping' the Amiga on our market at an artificially low price.

But the Aust Clubs as usual do their best -- we do not have access to the BBS's that you do -- due to our very high costs -- it is not possible to link up and download. Therefore, my request for good animation demo's and the like -- particularly for the ST at this stage because we have to make that a big seller here.

Norman Pearce
P.O. Box 333
Norwood, S.A. 5067 Australia

A CURE FOR TANDY IT IS

Gentlemen:

Thank you for your prompt response to my request to join NOVATARI and sending the requested issues of your fine newsletter Current Notes. I truly believe that this is one of the best newsletters I have seen, especially your current September issue. The articles and reviews are very well written ... as good if not better than some of the articles in BYTE magazine. Very well thought-out.

My brother Ed, (who lives in Alexandria, VA), and I attended one of your users group meetings at the Washington Gas Light building when I visited him in July. We both were impressed by the high quality of the people in charge and also of the type of folks attending this meeting. The combined knowledge of this group, (if it could ever be evaluated), would be staggering! I am fast gaining a lot of respect for the "new" ATARI users.

Ed and I each are owners of Tandy 2000 computers and are not too happy with the way that the Tandy Corp. has left owners like us, "by-the-way-side". They certainly have made no effort in making available any means of providing

'compatibility' for the many, many software programs that are now offered to the computing public. All they did was bring out another model (e.g. the Tandy 3000). Then, to top that, their Tandy 1000 was superseded by the 1000SX and the 1000EX, all IBM PC compatible!! No upgrade ... just buy another Tandy computer.

The 2000 is a powerful machine, sure, but there just aren't very many programs available. Too bad, because these systems, as you know require a substantial outlay of funds. I guess that I was 'Tandy-Indoctrinated', because I started my computing world back on May 15, 1982 with a Tape version of their Model III. I had that converted to a 2-Disk drive then had that-converted to a Model 4. Then purchased 2 external disk drives (making it a Model 4,4-Disk drive computer with a lot of expensive Tandy software!!). I seemed to be happy with this operation, but wanted more speed and RAM (Model 4 had only 128K RAM, of which 64K was a RamDisk -- not really what I had in mind.) Throughout this period, I had purchased three Tandy Printers.

Then, ALONG CAME JONES, the highly-touted TANDY2000!!! This was going to be the greatest thing since 'bubble-gum'! Well, I had to have this machine!!! No doubt about it! (I always liked bubble-gum anyway). So.... ole' Kenneth bounced out and bought one in August of '84 (to the tune of about \$6,700.00). It had 728K RAM, Hi-resolution Graphics, a High-Resolution color monitor, 2-Disk drives & MS-DOS (a new system to learn -- after LSDOS, TRSDOS6, and TRSDOS 1.3). Everything except a Hard Disk Drive (Ed has that). We, (the machine and I), got along just fine. I was learning the MS-DOS operating system and waiting patiently for all the "great software" to come along for this new machine. Well, as you now know, it never materialized to any great extent. So, that is why Ed and I have gone the ATARI computer route. I know from all that we have heard and read about this company, we'll be much happier with this setup. (Case In point: Bob Kelly's September article regarding the dinner with Sig Hartman, Richard Frick, Joe Waters, Jack Holtzauer, Ted Bell & son.

My brother and I each purchased the ATARI 1040ST computers, with SF314 Disk drives from John & Suzy of L&Y ELECTRONICS, and I bought another along with MUSIC STUDIO and a Synthesizer for my son (who has a "Top-Forty" band in Florida), to help him compose music. Also, I ordered EASY SCORE, a new program for composing by HYBRED ARTS in Los Angeles, CA, that was recommended by 'Mark' at the Atari Technical service office.]

I mention these facts only because Ed & I are 'fed-up' with Tandy and probably won't spend another nickel for their products...the money will now go for ATARI 1040ST hardware and software!!!

K. R. Forbes
Lake City, Florida

FOR THE LOW ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEE OF \$25, ST NETWORK MEMBERS
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ST SOFTWARE

(add 5% to total, add \$2 for S/H for each software title ordered)
(new members - do not add 5% and S/H on application for membership)

Abacus Assem. Pro	\$36	Central Pt. CopyII	\$22	Michtron Logo	....	\$27	Regent Word II	...	\$56
File Pro	30	CompuServe		Major Motion	....	22	Spell	.....	27
PC Board	240	Starter Kit	....	Mi-Term	.....	27	Base	.....	56
ST Forth/MT	30	Cosmi Super Huey	..	M-Disk	.....	22	Royal Help Calc	...	16
ST Text Designer	30	DAC Easy Accounting	42	Person. Money Man	27		Shanner Macro Desk	20	
ST Text Pro	30	DAC Easy Payroll	..	Softspool	.....	22	Macro Manager	...	35
Discs for Books	10	Datasoft Mercenary	20	Time Bandit	....	22	SW-8	.....	99
Aca. Typing Tutor	20	Alternate Reality	20	Utilities	....	34	Sierra On Line		
Acc. Leader Board	22	Dra. Grp. 4xForth +	35	Your Finan. Fut.	..	20	Black Cauldron	..	22
Tenth Frame	22	Dr. T's Music Software		Microprose			Donald Duck	....	15
Acc. Mean 18	25	CZ Patch	....	Silent Service	..	22	King's Quest I	..	27
Activ. Borrow. Time	27	Midi Recorder	..	Gunship	.....	22	King's Quest II	.	27
Hacker	27	E. A. Chessmaster	26	Mirage H & D Base	..	40	King's Quest III	27	
Hacker II	27	Finan. Cookbook	..	H & D Forth	....	30	ST OneWrite	....	56
Little Comp. Peop.	27	Epyx Rogue	..	Migraph Easydraw	..	85	Ultima II	....	33
Mindshadow	27	Temple of Ashai	22	Omni. Universe II	..	40	Winnie the Pooh	.	15
Music Studio	32	Firebird The Pawn	25	O.S.S. Disk Kit	..	24	Soft Logik Corp.		
Adv. Int. Fant. 4	11	Starglider	....	Personal Pascal	..	41	Publish. Partner	90	
Spiderman	11	FTL Sundog	..	Personel Prolog	..	54	Spinnaker Amazon	..	27
Antic A-Calc	36	Gamestar Baseball	..	O.V.S. Delta Pat.	..	15	Fahrenheit 451	..	27
CAD-3D	30	Hybrid Arts		Monkey Business	..	15	Homework-Writing	27	
Cartographer	21	CZ Droid	....	Paper. ST Toolbox	..	24	Homework-Math	..	27
C.O.L.R. Obj. Ed.	18	Easy Track	....	Paradox ST Karate	..	22	Nine Princes	..	27
Disk Doctor	18	Infocom Moonmist	20	Space Staion	....	22	Perry Mason	..	27
Expert Opinion	60	Leather Goddesses	20	ST Protector	....	18	Treasure Island	..	22
Flash	24	Wishbringer	....	Penguin			SSI Phantasie	..	24
GST Macro Assem.	42	Trinity	....	Crimson Crown	..	11	SST Chat 2.0	....	13
Lattice C	90	Zork I	..	Coveted Mirror	..	11	Sublogic		
Red Alert	15	Zork II	..	Do Topos	....	11	Flight Simulator	29	
Artworx Thai Boxing	11	Zork III	..	Frank and Ern.	..	11	Synapse Mindwheel	..	27
Bridge 4.0	18	LDW Basic Compiler	42	Sword of Kadash	..	11	Essex	..	27
Hole in One	18	Mark Williams C	..	The Quest	....	11	Brimstone	..	27
Strip Poker	24	M.O.U. Final Word	..	Transylvania	....	11	TDI Andra	..	60
Atari Joust	17	Hex	..	Phylon Hen. Basic	30		Modula 2 Reg.	..	45
Developer's Pack	210	Mince	..	Phylon Fast Basic	78		Modula 2 Dev.	..	85
dB Man	85	PC InterComm	..	P.C.A.			UCSD Pascal	..	42
Star Raiders	17	MegaMax C Compiler	161	Graphic Artist	..	120	Unison World		
Batt. Incluc. Degas	22	Meta. Assem.	..	Font Editor	....	48	Art Gal. I	..	18
Degas Elite	44	Lattice C	..	G.A. Demo	....	36	Art Gallery II	..	18
IS Talk	46	Meta Pascal	..	Prosper.			Print Master	..	22
Isgur Portfolio	120	Michtron Backup!	..	Pro Fortran 77	..	92	VIP Professional	..	70
Time Link	27	BBS 2.0	..	Pri - Forbid. Quest	..	22	Winham Classics		
Thunder	46	Business Tools	..	Gateway	.....	27	Treasure Island	..	22
Bay. Word for Word	22	Cards	..	Psion Chess	....	37	Wizard of OZ	..	22
Beck. Micro C-Shell	30	Cornerman	..	Psychnosis Bratacus	..	30	Klent Megafont	..	22
Micro C Tools	15	Dos Shell	..	Quickview Zoomracks	48		Rubber Stamp	..	22
Micro Make	15	Dot Driver	..	Zoomracks II	..	72	Typesetter	..	22
Micro C Shell RTX	42	DFT	..	QMI ST Talk	....	11	ST Music Box RGB	27	
Micro MT C Shell	75	Kissed	..	Regent Word	....	27	ST Music Box Mono	27	

ST HARDWARE

(add 5% to total, S/H is included)
(new members - do not add 5% on application for membership)

Abacus books:	
ST Internals	.. \$14
GEM	.. 14
Machine Language	14
ST 3D Graphics	.. 18
Peeks and Pokes	.. 14
Tricks and Tips	.. 14
Atari Hardware	
520 ST CPU	.. \$340
SF 354 SS Drive	.. 70
SF 314 DS Drive	.. 180
SH204 20 MEG HD	625

Avatek 1200 Modem	.. 78
Blank Discs - 3.5"	
Sony/10 SS DD	.. 12
Fuji/10 SS DD	.. 12
BASF/10 SS DD	.. 12
Brown/10 DS DD	.. 17
Maxell/10 DS DD	.. 19
Casio CZ101	.. 250
Casio CZ1000	.. 365
EZ RAM	.. 145
Hippo Eprom Burner	.. 85
Hippo Video Digit.	.. 95

Hippo Sound Digit.	.. 95
Logic. Clock Card	.. 29
Magic Sack +	
(Mac Cartridge)	.. 99
Para. IBM Simulator	42
6' Printer Cable	.. 9
6' Disk Drive Cable	12
Supra 1200ST Modem	125
20 MEG H.D.	625
MS 64k print buf.	51
QMI 1200ST Modem	.. 125
Volkesmodem VM520	130

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Atari Scuttlebits

by Bob Kelly

Since Jack Tramiel purchased Atari, the main sources of information on Atari corporate performance were the underground rumor mill, public statements by Atari officials, or "informed" financial analysts. In reality, the rumors were most often leaks by disgruntled employees or dis-information; statements by Atari officials ended up usually being nothing more than publicity statements; and the "informed" analysts were very often the most uninformed of all. So "heroic-guessing" about Atari sales or financial performance became a highly refined but imprecise art form. Now, this situation has changed. With the recent announcement that Atari intends to sell 4 1/2 million shares of common stock, public disclosure of basic financial data is required.

I obtained the preliminary prospectus Atari and Paine-Webber (underwriter) produced, dated September 18, 1986. Much of my discussion will be drawn directly from this document with wide excursions clearly noted as my comments.

Just inside the front cover, the prospectus states the 520 ST was recently voted "computer of the year" by the pan-European computer magazine publishers and "computer value" of the year by InfoWorld magazine in the U.S. Then, there appears the following: "As of Sept. 15, 1986, the company had sold over 150 thousand ST computer systems world-wide." Repeat 150 thousand STs! What happened to the 250 to 300 thousand figures given in confidence? Could I be one of those uninformed analyst? Hold it, let's back up and start our inquiry more systematically. First, an examination of Atari's debt owed former owner, Warner Communications, is appropriate. Next, a look at the financial situation for Atari over the past two and one half years, plus some discussion of what products have been selling. Then, a list of the risk factors any investor should consider before buying Atari stock. Finally, who is running Atari and what are they getting paid?

I. WARNER & OWNERSHIP OF ATARI

In July 1984, Jack Tramiel acquired from Warner Communications Atari's entire inventory of computers, game machines, software, rights to the Atari name/logo, and certain liabilities. Warner's relationship to the new Atari under Jack Tramiel did not end at this point. For example, between July 1984 and June 1986, Warner Communications advanced to Atari the sum of \$24.7 million for payment of "certain liabilities assumed in the 1984 asset acquisition".

Atari intends to compensate Warner Communications for not only the dollar advance above but other business matters as well. Let's look at some hypothetical numbers for a moment. If we assume that Atari sells 4 1/2 million shares at \$12.00 per share, this yields \$54

million. Atari announced it will pay Warner \$36.1 million for accumulated debt. After deducting the expenses associated with this stock sale, roughly \$17 million remains for use as working capital by Atari (\$56-\$36-\$1=\$17). In addition to the debt repayment, Atari will issue to Warner 7.1 million shares of common stock. Again valued at \$12 per share, \$85 million flows to Warner resulting in a total payment from Atari of roughly \$120 million (85+36). Upon completion of these sales, Atari has satisfied all obligations to Warner and is on its own. (Comment - Keep in mind the fact that this stock offering is part of a larger effort to pay off the debt to Warner Communications, not for R&D or expansion. Note, I have held on to my Warner stock since 1983.)

In the end, the Tramiel family will still retain control over the company. Table 1 shows the principal shareholders before and after the offering of 4 1/2 million shares.

Table 1: Principal Atari Shareholders

Name	No. Shares Beneficially Owned	Before Offer-Ing (%)	After Offer-Ing (%)
Warner Communications	7,100,000	29.88	25.12
Jack Tramiel	12,753,815	42.67	45.13
Sam Tramiel	563,067	2.37	1.99
Samuel W.L. Chin	125,000	*	*
Leonard I. Schreiber	110,000	*	*
David Harris	125,000	*	*
Sig Hartmann	125,000	*	*
Public Offering	4,500,000	NA	NA
Other	2,860,468	NA	NA
<hr/>			
Total Outstanding	28,262,350		
*Less than 1%; NA=Not Applicable			

II. ATARI SALES/FINANCIAL DATA

It's no surprise Atari sells its products abroad. Just how much was anybody's guess. In fact international net sales for 1984, 1985, and the 6 months ending June 30, 1986 represented 43%, 60%, and 59% respectively of total net sales. In other words, 3 out of every 5 dollars were earned abroad. (Comment - Atari is a company that must be concerned about exchange rate adjustments.)

Table 2 presents the distribution of Atari's total net sales by major category for the last 6 quarters. The category titled "Purchased Products" is really the inventory of items obtained from Warner Communications at the time of purchase. It is obvious that for 1985

Table 2: Total Net Sales, Percent Distribution

	3/85	6/85	Three Months Ended			
			8/85	12/85	3/86	6/86
New & Redesigned Products:						
Computers		17%	41%	34%	63%	64%
Video games	3	9	12	5	12	27
<u>SUB-TOTAL</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>91</u>
Purchased Products	97	74	47	61	25	9
<u>TOTAL NET SALES</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>

Table 3: Atari Corporation Profit and Loss Data

	<u>03/85</u>	<u>06/85</u>	Three Months Ended			
			<u>08/85</u>	<u>12/85</u>	<u>03/86</u>	<u>06/86</u>
Net sales:						
New & redesigned Products	\$819	\$5,947	\$15,267	\$25,784	\$33,558	\$55,511
Purchased Products	23,867	17,019	13,718	39,566	11,319	5,198
<u>TOTAL NET SALES:</u>	<u>24,686</u>	<u>22,966</u>	<u>28,985</u>	<u>65,350</u>	<u>44,877</u>	<u>60,709</u>
COSTS & EXPENSES	39,948	34,040	30,803	63,015	40,308	48,399
NET INCOME (LOSS)	(\$15,533)	(\$11,142)	(\$2,538)	\$14,899	\$2,682	\$9,718

Inventory sales financially sustained Atari. In particular, the fourth quarter (Christmas) sales of inventory items constituted 61% of total sales. Just as interesting - Atari continued to sell video games after Tramiel purchased the company with sales increasing over time. As a matter of fact, for the second quarter of 1986, video game sales rose to 27% of total net sales. (Comment - I never want to hear anyone tell me again that the "new" Atari is not a video game producer.)

Atari Corporation profit and loss data is presented in Table 3. Inventory sales of products obtained from Warner totalled \$94.2 million in 1985 and \$16.5 million for the first half of 1986. As of July 1, 1986, the remaining inventory of purchased products from Warner totalled only \$22.6 million. For all practical purposes, this source of revenue will disappear in 1987. Sales of new and redesigned products (ST's primarily) are rising - look at 2nd quarter of 1986.

III. Perceived Risks for the Investor

In the prospectus there is a special section enunciating the risks any potential stock purchaser faces. The risks are associated not only with Atari itself but the computer industry in general. (Comment - Paine-Webber certainly presented a balanced statement of the risks.) The most significant points raised were:

1. Industry Trends. Sales of personal computers in the United States declined during 1984 and grew moderately in 1985. A slight growth in unit sales has been forecast for 1986. However, U.S. dollar sales of

personal computers may only rise modestly, if at all, due to price competition forcing prices down.

2. Short Operating History. The Company began operations in the second quarter 1984. Atari incurred cumulative losses through December 31, 1985 of \$77 million. The company reported a profit for the six months ending June 30, 1986, of \$12.4 million. There is no assurance that Atari will continue profitable operations.

3. Competition. Atari competes against larger companies such as IBM, Apple, Commodore, Tandy and Compaq, all of which have greater financial resources. Atari's computers do not use the MS-DOS operating system and as such are not compatible with IBM, which dominates the business market. The growing availability of low-priced IBM compatible computers could cut into Atari's profit margins.

4. Necessity for New Products. Atari will be required to incur substantial expenditures in research and development for new products without any guarantee of market acceptance. (Comment - Atari plans to spend 5-6 percent of net sales on R & D. This is NOT a high figure for an electronics firm.)

5. Necessity for Additional Applications Software. As of September 15, 1986 approximately 300 software products were available for the ST in the United States with a similar number available from developers outside the United States. Most of Atari's major competitors have larger software libraries. (Comment - This is not

true for the Amiga and the variety of software is less for some other microcomputers.)

6. Dependence on Single Manufacturing Facility. Atari's manufacturing is centralized in Tam-Shui, Taiwan. Accordingly, Atari is subject to risks of economic or political disruptions, transportation delays, changes in laws and government policies, and the imposition of special duties associated with international trade.

7. Share Eligible for Future Sale. (Comment - As I believe this section is most important for anyone thinking of investing in Atari, I will quote directly.)

"Commencing 90 days after completion of this offering, approximately 489,143 shares of Common Stock owned by existing shareholders will be eligible for sale. Commencing 180 days after completion of this offering, an additional approximately 21,133,000 shares of Common Stock owned by principal shareholders and WCI will become eligible for sale subject to the restrictions of Rule 144. Sale of such shares in whole or in part, or even the fact that they are available for sale, may have an adverse effect upon the market price of the Common Stock".

IV. ATARI MANAGEMENT/COMPENSATION

Table 4 shows the executive officers of the Company and their cash compensation (individual \$ amounts available only for the top 5 officials). Every single director/executive officer worked either for Commodore before coming to Atari or is a member of the Tramiel family with the exception of Mr. Katz, the V.P. for Marketing (formerly with EPYX Software).

Prior to this offering, there was no PUBLIC market for Atari common stock. Consequently, an initial determination as to the market/offering price was made - \$11.50 to \$13.50 per share. Atari does not intend to pay dividends. All earnings will be retained to finance expansion. The stock will be listed on the American Stock Exchange and public trading is expected to start in late October or early November. There you are, what is your decision?

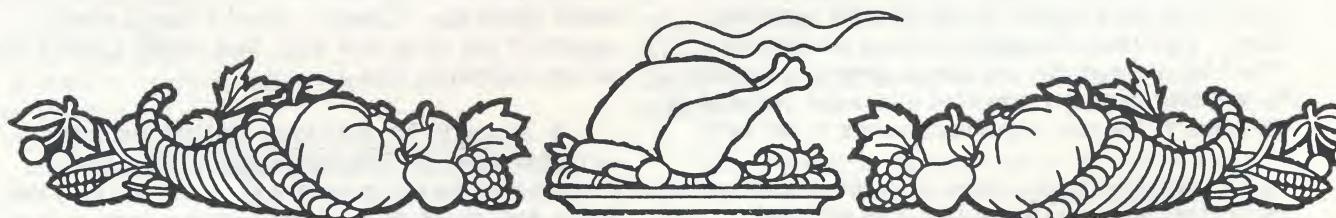
Next month, some more on the Atari and some industry news as the year draws to a close.

(Editor's Note: Bob Kelly is the Senior Economist for the Natural Gas Research Institute in Washington, D.C.)

Table 5: Atari Executive Officers

Name	Age	Position(s) Held	Cash Compensation *
Jack Tramiel	58	Chairman of Board	----
Sam Tramiel	36	President	162,500
Samuel W.L. Chin	36	Vice President	125,000
Leonard I Schreiber	72	Director (Legal Counsel)	----
Gregory A. Pratt	37	Vice President-Finance	125,000
Taro Tokai	40	Vice President	114,874
Garry Tramiel	26	Secretary/VP Admin.	----
Shiraz Shivji	38	VP-Advanced Tech.	----
Leonard Tramiel	31	VP-Software Development	----
Michael V. Katz	43	VP-Mktg/Entertainment Electronics	----
Thomas Brightman	31	VP-Production Engrng.	89,230
Joseph Spiteri	56	VP-Manufacturing	----
Total (all twelve Exec. Officers)			\$906,795

*figures for the year ending 1985. Note, there is also a stock option plan which is not included in the above compensation figures.



Atari Resource

by Milt Creighton

A VISIT WITH JOE CATTERINO

OF BLACK PATCH SYSTEMS

Earlier columns focused on store-front retailers and some of them had a good deal to say about mail-order companies. Since Black Patch Is one of the largest (if not the largest) Atari-only mail order company in the country, It was decided to give them an opportunity to defend the mail-order trade. I arrived at their facility at 415 Headquarters Drive, Bay #5 in Millersville, MD only to find that the name on the building was Annapolis Computer Company. That name turned out to be the store-front operation of Black Patch where customers can walk in off the street and buy the same merchandise offered In the mail-order ads. Fortunately, I managed to catch Joe Catterino and Dana Stibolt between phone calls and we had time for a nice chat.

Q: Black Patch Is an unusual name for a company that sells software. How did you come up with it?

A: I used to run a bulletin board called Black Patch Systems at my house when I was eighteen. I started it on July 15, 1984 about 30 days after I finished high school. It was the second Atari bulletin board in Maryland. Dana ran the first Atari bulletin board and two of our other employees ran two other Atari bulletin boards. I started Black Patch by selling mostly hardware on the bulletin board. I don't know why I called it Black Patch but the first thing I did was get myself a license and a retail sales tax number.

Q: Was it difficult to get started, being so young?

A: Yes, It was really hard for me to find distributors at first. I was eighteen and I didn't know that much about business at that time but I kept on until I found a few distributors willing to deal with me. Luckily, Dana's mom ran a retail computer store and they sold a little bit of Atari hardware although they sold mostly business systems such as IBM, AT&T, and NCR. From the distributors they dealt with we learned who the Atari distributors were and after that we were on our merry way. That's how we started and then, after a while, we actually started running a small retail section in her store. That continued until she got bought out by "Computers, Etc". At that point we had to make a decision to stop completely or open up a retail location on our own. We decided to open a store in Arnold, Md right behind the post office. The whole place was about as big as just our store-front now, about 640 square feet. We got stock in and opened up and it reminded me of an auto parts store with a desk counter and all. We had an ST and a 130 on display and that was about it. That was in October of last year.

It was only a short step from that to mail-order operation. We started that by advertising in CURRENT NOTES because at that time a full-page ad was only \$50. We made up our own ads to see what kind of a response we'd get. It was very good, and in October of 1985 we had the Black Patch number moved from my house to the store. We had an incredible winter, especially the Christmas season. Sales were very good even though we didn't start advertising nationally in ANTIC until March of this year. So most of those sales were from the retail location; we did very little mail order back then. After that, mail order sales began to grow and we decided to advertise nationally. We talked to both ANALOG and ANTIC and decided that ANTIC was a better deal. We just weren't satisfied with ANALOG even though we did advertise with them for a while. We started with a half-page ad in ANTIC and got our 800 number installed in January and we were on our way.

We couldn't believe how much business there was out there. The phone began to ring and ring and in two months we were doing full-page ads. Of course, now we've expanded to a two-page color spread in ANTIC. And now here it is early October and we're working on our January ad which will be out in December.

Q: It must be difficult to plan your sales strategy that far in advance. How do you do it?

A: Well, we get a list from our distributors of all the software which is supposed to be out before the end of the year. Apex, for example, has a list of ST software eight pages long with about 400 program titles on it. From that we pick out what we think are going to be the hottest selling items. Sometimes all we've got to go on is the title and the company who makes it. We also try to find out what's going to be advertised or reviewed in ANTIC that month because that'll be what we get the most demand for.

Q: Do you have the same problems with hardware?

A: I don't know if you noticed, but in last month's ANTIC you started seeing a lot of dealers in there with \$400 prices for the 520 monochrome system. Everybody got stuck. If you call up Electronic One, who is probably our biggest competitor in mail order, you'll find they claim the \$468 price they advertised was a typo, that the price is \$568 right now. It was the Atari July special. Since the prices have to be decided three months ahead of time, the Atari July special is just showing up this month because of the delay in publishing the magazine. You can get caught with those kind of specials. A lot of things you don't know whether to put in or not because, if you

(Continued on Page 16)

Black Patch

ST HARDWARE

1040 ST MONO.....	CALL
1040 ST RGB.....	CALL
520 ST MONO.....	CALL
520 ST RGB.....	CALL
SF354 SS/DD.....	CALL
SF314 DS/DD.....	CALL
SM124 MONOCHROME.....	CALL
SC1224 RGB.....	CALL
SHD 204 DRIVE.....	CALL
SMM804 PRINTER.....	CALL
ST PRINTER CABLES.....	12.00
ST MODEM CABLES.....	12.00

PRINTERS

ATARI SMM 804.....	CALL
ATARI XMM 801.....	CALL
PANASONIC 1080.....	198.00
1091.....	229.00
1092.....	309.00
1592.....	CALL
3131.....	259.00
3151.....	CALL
STAR MICRONICS	
NX-10.....	234.00
NL-10.....	CALL
EPSON LX-80.....	CALL
FX-85.....	CALL
FX-286.....	CALL
LQ-800.....	CALL
LQ-1000.....	CALL

MODEMS

AVATEX 1200.....	78.99
AVATEX 1200HC.....	128.99
QMI 1200ST.....	129.00
ATARI XM301.....	35.75
ATARI 1200.....	CALL
SUPRA 300AT.....	33.99
HABA 1200SZ.....	109.00

ST SOFTWARE
ACTIVISION

BORROWED TIME.....	32.50
HACKER.....	28.99
HACKER 2.....	31.75
MINDSHADOW.....	32.50
LITTLE COMPUTER PEOPLE.....	32.50
PAINTWORKS.....	43.99
MUSIC STUDIO.....	37.99
CHAMP. BASEBALL.....	CALL
PORTAL.....	CALL
BASKETBALL.....	CALL
GAMEMAKER.....	CALL
PEBBLE BEACH.....	CALL

ACCESS

LEADER BOARD.....	25.99
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ACCOLADE

MEAN 18.....	26.99
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ATARI

HOME PLANET.....	23.75
JOUST.....	23.75
STAR RAIDERS.....	23.75
DBMAN.....	CALL
CP/M EMULATOR.....	CALL
IBM EMULATOR.....	CALL

ACADEMY

TYPING TUTOR.....	24.50
A-CALC.....	39.99
A-SEKA.....	23.99
A-RAM.....	14.50
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FLASH.....	27.50
GST C.....	59.99
GST ASSM.....	53.50
EXPERT OPINION.....	66.50

BATTERIES INCLUDED

DEGAS.....	25.99
BTS: THE SPREADSHEET.....	CALL
THE CONSULTANT.....	CALL
PORTFOLIO.....	CALL
I'S TALK.....	49.50
PAPERCLIP ELITE.....	CALL
DEGAS ELITE.....	CALL
I'S TIME.....	CALL
HOMEPAK.....	CALL
THUNDER.....	25.99
TIMELINK.....	32.50
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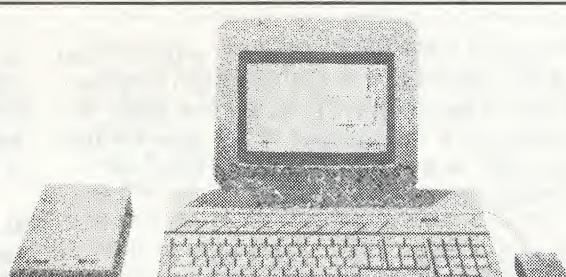
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ATARI RESOURCE (Continued from Page 13)

get stuck, you'll have people complaining you're full of it and all. You just have to guess. Hardware is the hardest because you never know what's going to go on with hardware, prices going up and going down, Supra changing from a 5 1/4 to a 3 1/2 hard disk, Panasonic discontinuing the 1080 and the 1091 printers.

Q: Are you satisfied with your present facilities or do you plan to expand?

A: Right now I'm satisfied. I can't complain. We have a lot of people come from Annapolis, Baltimore, and Washington. We're centrally located for all three. Route 3 is a pretty major road but it's not over-developed like Route 2. Of course, there's a lot of new construction all around us. We're talking about getting another 2000 square foot warehouse in this complex like the one we have now. Then we could expand this one into more of a retail location.

Q: What kind of sales volume do you have each month?

A: We average around three hundred thousand dollars a month. That's about 80-90% in mail order and the rest from retail sales. In the last quarter of last year we did a little less than a hundred thousand dollars for the quarter. What we did in that last quarter, we do in ten days now. Of course, a lot of people don't know we're Atari only. People walk into the store from places like the Westinghouse plant down the road. They've heard about us because we have good prices on Panasonic printers or Avatex modems or paper or disks. They seem to be surprised we sell only Atari computers, especially since they came here wanting a PC. We have to go through a lot to convince them Atari is no longer just a game machine.

People still see Atari and think of games. A good friend of mine was a big Apple fan. He had an Apple II and was determined to buy a Macintosh until he saw the 1040. At that point, he bought a 1040 because it was more for the money. To this day, every time he comes in here, he tells us he's happy with what he bought.

An average customer comes in here once a week to see what's new. We have quite a strong retail business since we sell retail at the same prices we advertise in mail order and we do service what we sell. I know there are some people who don't want consumers to believe that but it's true.

Q: How do you feel your service compares to other retail establishments?

A: We have people come in here who have bought their computers from some of the mass merchandisers only to find the keyboards don't work. Most of the time it's just a matter of cleaning the contacts with contact cleaner and we'll do that for them and usually for nothing. Or sometimes people will bring their TOS ROM chips in and ask us to install them. Other people charge

\$60 for the chip installation and the chips themselves only cost \$24. We charge \$24 for the chips and the installation together and we put them in while you wait.

Some of the other retailers make service their big thing in their ads. Our customers, particularly those who know us, come in here and laugh and show the ads to us. They'll say things like "they're at you again, Joe", but I can tell you that none of our retail business is going that way. In your last interview with Cris Amori, he said he had a good month in July. I think everybody had a good month in July because of that monochrome special. A 512K machine for less than \$500 was outrageous. Everybody's business went up in July because of that special. If Atari ran that special in November and December, I don't think they'd be able to handle the market because that's how much demand there was then.

And that's the only real complaint I have about Atari, they don't get their announcements to the dealers soon enough. It's on the Atari bulletin board before the dealers find out about it and a lot of times a consumer will tell me about a special before I find out about it from Atari. The way Atari works, they don't promote on TV, they don't do a lot of magazine advertisements. They do ANTIC and BYTE with their question/answer type things but they haven't done any advertising specials in any of the magazines. It's pretty much up to the dealers themselves to find out about the specials. Sometimes they're almost over with before we find out about them.

Q: How do your sales break out between software and hardware?

A: It's been about 50/50. The 520ST software has been selling very good. All the good titles have been selling very well. PERSONAL PASCAL is probably the hottest selling language right now. I'm selling approximately 10 of those a day. Gamewise, THE PAWN sells very well and so does WINTER GAMES, SILENT SERVICE, TIME BANDIT, and SUNDOG. Those are our best selling programs. On the productivity side, THUNDER is doing very well and FLASH and so is THE GRAPHIC ARTIST since they lowered their price.

As the piracy problem is concerned, I don't think the ST has much of a problem. People call me up about every other day with some question about a pirated piece of software, trying to find out how to use it. I'll ask them if they've lost the little blue and green instruction book when there is no blue and green cover on the instruction book. If they say yes, you know they have a pirated copy. Some of the retailers north of us lend software out and I think that has a lot to do with the piracy. Even though our name sounds like a pirate, we don't condone it. We thought about selling the 1050 duplicator but we don't even sell the HAPPY in the 8-bit line. We do sell a few programs like the CHIPMUNK which will actually deprotect a program and we sell a copy program for the ST for backing up software. We know approximately how much is going on out there and I feel there's more piracy going on in the 8-bit than the ST because most of the stuff being pirated out there are

games. If you pirate something like PERSONAL PASCAL, it's not worth a lot without without the manual. And I think that if there was a problem with the ST, I'd know because I'm selling a lot more ST software than 8-bit software now and since the quality of the ST software has improved over what was available in the beginning, piracy would show up pretty fast.

Q: Of your hardware sales, how many of them are in the 8-bit line compared to the ST line?

A: Computerwise, I'm selling more 130's than ST's right now, about 200-250 a month. That's a lot more than the number of ST's we're selling but we're having more trouble keeping ST's in stock. We don't stock as many 520's as 130's and people who want to buy a computer want it to be available right then. They don't want to wait. As a result, we usually sell more 520's retail than mail order. I sell a lot more accessories for the 520. In the ST line, the 1040 is outselling the 520 right now. Of course, computer sales are very seasonal in nature. Christmas is the hottest selling season and summer is the slowest season because people are spending money on vacations and the computer spends its time in the closet. The beginning of September is good for us because people are going back to school and need new computers and printers. In January there's a big demand for software for the computers people got at Christmas. Then there's a slow period until April when people get their tax refund checks and then in May and June people are buying computers for graduations gifts.

Q: How many ST systems do you sell in a month's time?

A: I'll probably sell around 90-100 ST's this month.

Q: What do you think of the reliability of Atari computers?

A: Good, but we had a lot of problems initially with loose chips in the 520's. There wasn't really anything wrong with the computer, but if we got 20 of them in, there would be about six which wouldn't work because of loose chips. That's why we try to sell 520's retail, there were just too many problems with shipping them back and forth in mail order. The 1040's we've had less problems with. We had a few problems with disk drive alignment but that's about it. The overall reliability is very good. Out of all the ones I've sold, I've only had five that I couldn't repair and, in each of those cases, I've replaced the bad one with a brand new one to the customer. In the 8-bit line, we had a bad batch of 1050's about a month ago. We got thirty in and about six of them were bad. With the 130, about the only problems we've had were bad keyboards. Overall, I'd say Atari's reliability was very good.

Q: Since your business is mainly mail order, how do you accomplish warranty work or other repair for mail order customers if any is needed?

A: For 130's and other 8-bit, they get new equipment that day. If it's in stock. If it isn't, it's shipped as soon

as it comes in which, at most, is ten days. As for the ST line, we repair them. What usually happens is that we'll get it in one day and fix it that night, as long as parts are available, and then ship it back out the next day. If we can't fix it, we send them a new unit--and we have done that. We also do the 1 Meg upgrades here for the 520's. The price we advertise includes return shipping. That kind of work takes a little longer because we usually do the work on Sundays.

Q: Getting back to sales for a moment, one of the complaints I've heard locally is that your phone lines are always busy. I understand you've taken steps to correct that.

A: We only have one 800 number and last month 75,000 people tried to call and got busy signals, so we are aware of the problem. In the old place we had only two numbers, the 800 number and a customer service number. Now we have seven phone lines. We have the one up front in the retail store, three order lines, and three for customer service. We only have one 800 number and the other order lines can be reached by calling (301) 987-2300 which are on a rotary. I know people say they can't get through, but sometimes there are hours when the phone doesn't ring. The 800 number is the busiest, of course, and it's the most expensive for us. Not all calls are sales either, only about 40-50% of the calls we receive on the order lines result in sales.

Q: In the last few months I've done interviews with other local retailers and I've also had occasion to see some of the recent ads in CURRENT NOTES. I can't help but think some of those remarks are aimed at you. Why do you think anyone would object to your methods of doing business?

A: I don't know; I've never done anything against them. I don't think L&Y said anything against us in their interview. We actually recommend L&Y to people who are looking for a Washington area store. We've sent them customers. I think the thing with Cris Amori is over the ATARIFEST. We were told, he tried to ban us from the last ATARIFEST and the ad you are talking about appeared as soon as he could get it in after the May ATARIFEST. He says we're killing the price points but he's buying these ads in CURRENT NOTES claiming he'll beat our prices. I don't know how he can justify that by his own logic. His ads aren't hurting us at all. In fact, a lot of our walk-in customers have seen his ads and still come here. And a lot of them are from Gaithersburg too! We do a lot of business with Gaithersburg people, mostly because when he's not matching our prices, he's selling at retail. I don't think you can be successful selling at retail right now. So I don't understand what he has against us. We've never done anything against him.

Q: Do you feel you can support what you sell at the prices you charge?

A: We've supported them so far and haven't had any problems. At this point, we feel we can. I think I'm making about the same markup as Cris but I get a few deals by buying in volume and I just pass the difference

on to the consumer. It's as simple as that. I just get a different discount from the distributors because of the amount I buy and the fact that I pay cash up front.

Q: Other than price, why should anyone buy from Black Patch rather than another store-front retailer?

A: We sell price, really. That's what the consumer is after nowadays. It's like cars, people are trying to get the best deal. But other than that, we service what we sell. We only sell Atari and we've never sold anything but Atari hardware. Everyone who works here owns an Atari and everyone knows the Atari machines. Some of us know the 8-bit line better and others of us know the ST line. I personally have seven Atari computers. So even the people who are taking orders on our phone lines or working customer service understand the customer's problems. And, if you know the mail order business, you know that's not always the case.

As for our customer service record, we are a member of the Better Business Bureau and we have a perfect record. And we have a lot of nice letters from satisfied customers who appreciate the way we do business. And now we have a store-front location for those customers who can't wait for the mails. In our mail order operation, we ship to every state. We even ship overseas. Last week we sent out 48 packages to destinations outside the United States. Overseas sales are mostly software but we've sold about a dozen 520's. We sell a lot to servicemen overseas and to the military dependent school system which has a lot of Atari equipment.

Q: Are there products you offer that no one else offers?

A: Yes, we are the US outlet for the DIN connectors for the Atari monitors. Those connectors allow you to make monitor connectors. We are planning to offer a box which will allow you to use any IBM-type RGB monitor. That will probably be out the first week in October and will retail for \$39.95. It'll be good for someone who has a monochrome system and has access to an IBM RGB monitor. That's good because right now you can't buy an Atari monitor separately. Atari is afraid they won't have enough monitors for the Christmas demand as it is. So the monitor box should be a hot seller. As for new software, FONTRITER will be available soon. It allows you to take any user-defined font from DEGAS and use it with FIRST WORD or any GEM-based program. It'll allow you to incorporate graphic images in DEGAS format too. We don't have an exclusive on it but we think it will be very popular.

Q: What are you looking forward to now as far as sales are concerned?

A: Well, pretty soon you're going to see the Christmas rush. And we're looking forward to ATARIFEST. We love ATARIFEST. We'll get a tractor-trailor or as big a truck as we can find and load it up with as much of the hot selling programs as we can or anything we've been sitting on to unload at cost or close to cost. That allows us to get our name around the area so that people will learn we have a retail operation. It also allows us to take care of anyone who hasn't been able to get through on the phone lines. We're looking forward to it and hope to see a good crowd there.

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Music, MIDI, and You

by Mike Lehr

This month we'll talk about the upcoming ATARIFEST and answer some questions related to the previous columns on shopping for MIDI products.

ATARIFEST

Terry White and myself will run the MIDI room at the ATARIFEST with help from Tom Morgan and other local enthusiasts. We have also received enormous support both from CHUCK LEVIN's MUSIC CENTER of Wheaton, Maryland, and from L&Y ELECTRONICS of Woodbridge, Virginia. These vendors are loaning us several thousand dollars worth of musical instruments, computers, and software. Special thanks are due in particular to John and Suzie Linton (L&Y) and to John Chase (CHUCK's) for their time and expert advice.

ATARIFEST offers a special opportunity to hear MIDI instruments and to see them used by live performers and in purely computerized modes. Some professional musicians have agreed to perform at various times during the day. Several software packages will also be demo'd.

Both 8-bit and 16-bit (ST) software will be well represented, even though the MIDI room will likely be located in the 16-bit area. In fact, one 8-bit package promises to knock your sonic socks off and may prove to be the most impressive MIDI software at the show.

Additionally, informal tutorials will be available, and a great deal may be learned simply from mingling with other enthusiasts. In particular, several musicians are expected to attend, because the ATARIFEST is being publicized in music stores throughout the area.

All in all, the ATARIFEST promises to provide an interesting and useful forum for ATARI owners and musicians who are interested in MIDI. We look forward to seeing you there.

Q's and A's

Some questions have arisen in connection with the articles on shopping for MIDI products. This seems like a good time to answer them, inasmuch as the holiday season is approaching quickly.

Q: How well does the tune request command guarantee that instruments will play in tune with each other?

A: The tune request does not guarantee that different instruments will play in tune. The tune request causes each instrument to adjust note pitches relative to a reference note, which is a note "A" vibrating at what that instrument senses to be 440

MIDI AT ATARIFEST SOME Q's and A's

cycles per second. However, errors can occur in what an instrument senses as 440 cycles per second. Therefore, most instruments allow the reference pitch itself to be adjusted, and you should check for this feature before buying.

Q: Is a sequencer a hardware or software item?

A: The term "sequencer" is used in two ways. Sometimes the term refers to software programs that cause general-purpose computers like your ATARI to issue timed sequences of MIDI commands, such as note-on and note-off commands. However, there are also hardware sequencers. In contrast to general purpose computers, hardware sequencers are special-purpose computers that store and replay MIDI commands and that may perform additional MIDI functions. Note that synthesizers and drum machines are also special-purpose computers.

Q: Why does the song position pointer increase by one for every six MIDI clocks?

A: The song position pointer indicates the current musical location relative to the beginning of a piece. Musicians often indicate location by counting the number of bars (measures) from the beginning of a piece. However, MIDI counts the number of sixteenth notes from the beginning of a piece and defines the song position pointer to equal this number. By definition, four sixteenth notes equal one quarter note, and also by definition, 24 MIDI clock messages are issued per quarter note. Thus six MIDI clock messages are issued per sixteenth note, which is why the song position pointer increases by one for every six clocks.

Q: How can the International MIDI Association be contacted?

A: I missed a clerical error last month, when the International MIDI Association was incorrectly referred to as the International MIDI Organization. The correct contact information is: International MIDI Association, 11857 Hartsook St., North Hollywood, CA 91607 (818) 505-8964

If you have other questions concerning MIDI or digital music, feel free to call me before 10:00 PM at (703) 931-9447 or drop me a line at 5037 Domain Place Alexandria, VA 22311.

Of course, you could ask your question to several of us at the ATARIFEST, and we hope to see you there.

Battle Bytes

by M. Evan Brooks

GETTYSBURG: THE TURNING POINT

PUBLISHER: SSI
 DESIGNER : Chuck Kroeger
 PRICE : \$59.95
 RATING : ****

GETTYSBURG is the second of SSI's detailed simulations of American Civil War battles. While bearing obvious resemblance to its predecessor ANTETAM (cf. CURRENT NOTES, May 1986), Gettysburg has been refined and improved to a great degree.

GETTYSBURG is quite detailed (although basic and intermediate versions are included) and allows one to play either, both or neither side. The last option is especially helpful in order to give the novice/intermediate player a grasp of what is happening, and more important, what should be happening. With hex areas of 200 yard depth and turns on an hourly basis, the full campaign game can require c. 40 hours of play time. However, shorter scenarios are available, and one may elect to begin on the second or third day of the battle if a shorter playing time is desired.

The changes from the ANTETAM system are fully covered in the documentation. They include: revision of command and rally, ammunition resupply, more detailed artillery rules, recovery from fatigue, weather visibility and capture of prisoners. The modifications make the game both smoother and more accurate; it is nice to see that criticisms of SSI's earlier efforts have been answered in a pleasing manner.

The documentation itself is relatively complete, although two minor omissions exist. Victory is decided by casualty ratio and area possession; the Union notes square "10,1" as being listed twice. This was a typographical error, and one should be corrected to "18,1". The rules allow for reconnaissance of enemy units (rough approximations of size); however, nowhere does it state that such reconnaissance is limited to 5-6 times per turn (the designer has stated that a random factor may allow as many as 10 recons per turn). The most elegant portion of the documentation package is the historical map section. Actual historical deployments are depicted at various times utilizing representations similar to the graphic display. This is extremely useful in allowing one to translate from "bare bones" history to computer environment. These interesting maps serve as a gauge in order for one to ascertain his progress; SSI is to be commended for this educational bonus.

The bibliography is relatively complete, although no game antecedents are noted (there does seem to be some resemblance to SPI's Terrible Swift Sword). This

reviewer would suggest the following additions to the bibliography for the interested reader:

- (1) Esposito & Elting, West Point Atlas of American Wars (the essential reference to American conflicts)
- (2) Shaara, Killer Angels (one of the greatest Civil War novels, eminently readable and accurate)
- (3) Frassanito, Gettysburg (pictures of the battlefield then and now; for an excellent appreciation of how the terrain really appeared)
- (4) Foote, Civil War: A Narrative (Vol. 2) (excellent writing and development)
- (5) Moore, Bring the Jubilee (science fiction treatment of the alternate world if the North had lost Gettysburg and the effect of tampering with history).

As for the game itself, the mere subject matter is sufficient to whet the appetite of most wargamers. This reviewer feels that ANTETAM suffered from the fact that the battle itself simply wasn't that interesting — a Union army, twice as strong as its opponent, attempted to bludgeon its way to victory while hamstrung by a vacillating commander. Artificial constraints were required to force the player into similar behavior; the net result was a "slug-fest" lacking finesse. On the other hand, GETTYSBURG was a meeting engagement; the armies, relatively equal in size, blundered into each other and fought a three-day engagement. What is particularly intriguing about GETTYSBURG is that each side has the opportunity to be both offensive and defensive. The Army of Northern Virginia outnumbers the Army of the Potomac for the majority of the first day. If victory is to be gained, it must be quick; a stalemate or marginal victory will lead to massive casualties in the second and third days as the Union reinforcements are able to make their weight felt.

This reviewer played the campaign scenario as the North with historical parameters and advanced options; however, full visibility was utilized. Full visibility was utilized because otherwise, the screen blacks out totally during the computer movement phase (this may last up to 7 minutes). In ANTETAM, this did not occur; the SSI staff said this was done here because memory requirements to access each unit to determine its visibility would have been excessive. With full visibility, the player has the option to watch or black out the screen. Thus, hidden movement is poorly implemented.

As the North, one must hold onto Culp's and Cemetery Hills. Historically, the South did not even attempt to seize this key terrain on the first day. But then again, the Southern attacks were uncoordinated and unsure of their objectives. The computer does not make this error; assaults are delayed until combined arms offensives are virtually assured of success.

The player may become discouraged since the North cannot emulate its historical performance. This is true; virtually all histories of Gettysburg acknowledge that the Confederates could have achieved a major success on the first day. The Confederate computer will be difficult to delay, and the North will be hard pressed to retain Cemetery Hill and Culp's Hill. But this MUST be done; if this key terrain is lost, the North will be forced to assume the offensive in a disadvantageous position.

Historically, the South attacked piece-meal. Heth's division attacked Buford's cavalry without support. The computer will wait for Rodes' division before initiating the assault. Any Union defense on MacPherson ridge will be quickly outflanked and shattered. This reviewer recommends an immediate withdrawal to Gettysburg with the cavalry and Wadsworth's division. Gettysburg should be used as the Stalingrad of the Civil War. Entrench within the city, but only as an interim position; utilize most of the Union reinforcements to entrench on Culp's and Cemetery Hill. The Iron Brigade (Meredith) and the cavalry pose a strong defense, and they can buy time with their lives. Even if they are totally destroyed within the town of Gettysburg, their sacrifice should delay the Confederate assault on the hills until 3:00 PM. From that point on, HOLD the hills. If the hill position can be retained, the Confederate will be deterred from continuing. In this reviewer's experience, once the hills were retained, the Confederate computer wished to withdraw after day one, thereby giving the Union a major victory. This reviewer compelled the computer to continue, and assumed the offensive on the second day.

This brings up a lesson learned: "Beware the wounded Southern; he be a beast". Just because the Union has won on the first day does not cause a major disruption to Southern hopes. On the second day, the armies are evenly matched, and the prudent Union commander would be well advised to assume the defensive. But then again, the player may wish to be more aggressive. If so, offense must be tempered with caution. This reviewer's Union first day victory turned into a draw by the time the third day ended; in fact, the Confederates could have achieved a minor victory according to the victory conditions.

This points out a problem with the victory conditions. Points are given to each side for territorial possession (defined as having the last unit physically present there during a reinforcement phase). In this reviewer's experience, the North retained two such hexes, even though they had been under Confederate control from the middle of the first day. The South had simply failed to leave a unit there during the

reinforcement phase. The designer has stated that certain Confederate units are programmed to seize such hexes, but if the situation is critical elsewhere, their programming objectives will change in order to buttress the line. Thus, by shattering these units, the North may well retain "control" of important hexes totally beyond his real area of influence. Thus, as the North, one MUST use a portion of Buford's cavalry early to simply ride to the victory hexes and maximize their possession before returning to the defensive.

The victory conditions point up the biggest failing in GETTYSBURG. They do not reflect reality. This reviewer ended the game with a shattered force; Union casualties 37,000 (i.e. 50% of the army). However, Confederate casualties were even higher, and the South retained only 37% of its force. Given that the North's manpower replacement pool was so much greater, these types of losses would be devastating to the North, but FATAL to the South. Historically, Lee never again assumed the strategic offensive after Gettysburg; the losses simply could not be replaced. Remember, historical losses were 27,000 (South) and 23,000 (North). Even more important, the loss of able commanders could not be repaid by the South. In this reviewer's game, both Ewell and Longstreet were casualties, while the North did not lose a single corps commander. This type of loss would have shattered the Army of Northern Virginia beyond repair; the victory conditions do not recognize this and thereby distort the conclusion.

As a player, one must minimize leader casualties. Although division and corps commanders give combat incentives, their loss is more devastating. This reviewer recommends constant reshuffling of leaders in order to safeguard their lives. Their loss and the accompanying victory point loss is simply too risky.

Visibility is critical. As the battle rages, the small arms and artillery fire can create a haze over the battlefield, thereby causing future fires to be cancelled because of the lack of sighting. On the first day, the Union prays for the haze; to encourage it, fire everything at anything. Granted, damage caused may be slight, but the faster the battlefield is obscured, the better for the Union. By day two and three, the situation reverses, and the South hopes for the haze. Historical ammunition levels will support this type of activity; there is sufficient ammunition in the pool so that it can last all three days.

Artillery is a key to the battlefield. Confederate artillery is more effective at counterbattery operations, but the more numerous Union artillery is fine for destroying massed formations. The Union's biggest problem will be finding fields of fire for the artillery; in the first day, most of the artillery is masked, and the Southern artillery has a field day. The computer Union seems to play Napoleonic artillery, i.e. putting the artillery on the battle line itself. This can work, but it leaves the artillery open to close assault. One must continually monitor the artillery and adjust the fields of fire.

If the campaign game is played, the battle will cease to resemble its historical counterpart. If the North can retain the hills, the South will form its line east-west from Seminary Ridge to Culp's Hill and beyond; the North will form opposite. Historically, the South formed north-south on Seminary Ridge and the North opposite on Cemetery Hill-Little Round Top. Thus, the campaign game may well shift the army dispositions by 90 degrees. Also, the Union player must avoid overemphasizing a flanking movement to Wolf's Hill (extreme right flank). While this target may appear as an invitation to roll up the Southern left flank, the terrain is wooded, and despite this reviewer's commitment of the entire Fifth Corps, little was accomplished beyond a gradual pullback by the South.

This reviewer did manage a breakthrough east of Gettysburg, but by the time it was accomplished, both armies were too weakened for it to be decisive. Gettysburg itself remained contested. In fact, beware of potential traps; this reviewer insinuated a demi-brigade into Gettysburg on the third day, with the intention of seizing the city. Confederate assaults and zones of control forced the unit to retreat from zone of control to zone of control; total casualties exceeded 600, with the unit retaining a strength of 3511.

The documentation does not mention that a unit may be totally eliminated. This can be done; Union artillery towards the end of the third day did an excellent job of destroying several demi-brigades. These generally have a

remaining strength of under 50, but since the Union is unsure of their real strength, they may be used to shore up a defensive line.

Overall, GETTYSBURG is an excellent simulation. Building on a viable system, it took a battle more playable and made it a success. The game is detailed and requires thought and care. This reviewer recommends the campaign game for the true groggnard; for the remainder of us, beginning on the second day would be the game of choice. This is because the campaign game leads to historical deployments; the second day begins with the deployments most people think of when they hear "Gettysburg".

Joystick input would have been nice, as would direct access to units by number (a la KAMPFGRUPPE). But when the game is carefully analyzed, it is a success. Highly recommended!

From the Trenches: SSI has announced SHILOH as its next development of the Civil War series, and is in the early development stage of a battalion-regimental Napoleonic simulation which will include 5-6 scenarios and a construction set for the gamer to construct his own Napoleonic battles. Given this reviewer's interest in Napoleonic, it will be eagerly awaited!

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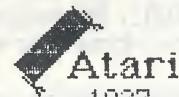
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THE NEW ALADDIN

A Disk-based Publication for the Atari 8-bits

Reviewed by Pamela Rice Frank

Just when we thought the world was abandoning the 8-bits, along comes THE NEW ALADDIN....

Boot Disk 1, Side 1 and you enter a new world of Atari adventure. Several seconds later, the familiar sky blue screen is cleared to display the front cover of this disk-based publication complete with a "genie" being released from its bottle. A carnival tune accompanies this picture. Then the animoto (music & animation) makes way for the cover picture entitled "Blazing New Trails." Pressing the [OPTION] key at this point allows you to "freeze" the picture and make any necessary color adjustments on your TV/monitor. After you have your screen displaying colors as closely resembling the disk case cover photograph as possible, press [OPTION] again and you'll automatically be advanced to a computer-enhanced digitized photo of a joystick advertisement followed by the table of contents. (By the way, should you need to make a further color adjustments, you can return to the cover picture while in the table of contents by simply pressing [ESC].)

While in the table of contents, you'll notice graphic "icon" images representing the topics covered in the contents. Pressing the "up" or "down" arrows to progress through the contents likewise highlights the respective top-of-the-page graphic. Make your selection, press [START], and you're prompted as to which disk to insert to continue your way through the publication.

Each "article" is preceded by its own graphic. (I personally love the one preceding the editorial by John Charles Logan, Editor of THE NEW ALADDIN and have had fantasies about having a library similar to the one preceding the Reference Shelf.) Mr. Logan refers to the publication as "an electronic magic lamp filled with information, entertainment, and technology...meant to be enjoyed on your computer, not relegated to the stack of magazines you glance through and then toss in the trash." (You mean you're eventually supposed to throw some of those things away? Mine have taken over my house.) John continues that everything is "at your fingertips. It's a unique and innovative publication with interaction, sound, and animation." At this point I'd determined that he obviously was enjoying his editor's job of putting the publication together. Now it was up to me to decide whether the enclosed three double-sided disks contained the stuff necessary to live up to his claims.

By pressing [START] again, I was once again back to the contents. As you've probably ascertained at this point, THE NEW ALADDIN is very easy to follow and use. The only annoyance is from the fact that because all this information is stored on six (count 'em, 6) separate disk

sides, selecting items further down the contents requires a disk swap to view the selection and then another disk swap to return to the menu when you're done. (I spoke with Mary Duerksen, administrative assistant at THE NEW ALADDIN, and she did tell me that those of you fortunate enough to have a hard disk for your 8-bit can watch for the information necessary to copy the three unprotected disks-worth of information available each issue to your hard disk and run them from there.)

The premier issue of THE NEW ALADDIN contains a profile/interview with Jack Tramiel, some info on the ST's, a "DUMP.PRG" in the Reference Shelf section to dump to a Panasonic KX-P1092 (or compatible) printer any GR.15 (7.6) MODE standard 62-sector graphic file, a game, a science fiction story, a chance to win \$25 by solving a puzzle, opinions, reviews, articles, etc. In other words, they live up to their claim of filling the three disks to the brim. (I even checked the individual disk contents from a DOS-generated disk directory and found very few empty sectors. One disk did have about 90 free sectors, but that's nit-picky. For the most part each disk only had around 10 free.)

THE NEW ALADDIN is guaranteed to work on the 800, the 800XL, and 65 & 130 XE's. It was tested and worked on a modified 400 and has not yet been tested on a 1200XL and is not guaranteed for those models.

THE NEW ALADDIN comes to you bi-monthly and is available for \$79.95 a year.

Also, if you prefer to not have any gaps in the number of issues you have on hand, THE NEW ALADDIN doesn't require you to pay an increased "back issue" rate. Simply tell them to begin your subscription with the Premier Issue (Volume 1.0) and they'll send you all subsequent issues to date. That will get you Volume 1.1 as well as 1.2, the Halloween Issue that's being shipped now.

Denise Holzhauser, a reviewer in the New Orleans' Atari User Group (NOAUG) NEWS had this to say about THE NEW ALADDIN: "This disk magazine has some of the best graphic pictures in BASIC found on an Atari 8-bit. It really brings out the graphic abilities of our 8-bit computer. It also pleases me to see it came out on an Atari first."

Supposedly Jack Tramiel saw DISK PUBLICATION, INC.'s demonstration of THE NEW ALADDIN running on an ATARI 130XE and was impressed and enthusiastic; however, he thought it was running on an ST. When he found out that

(Continued on Page 27)

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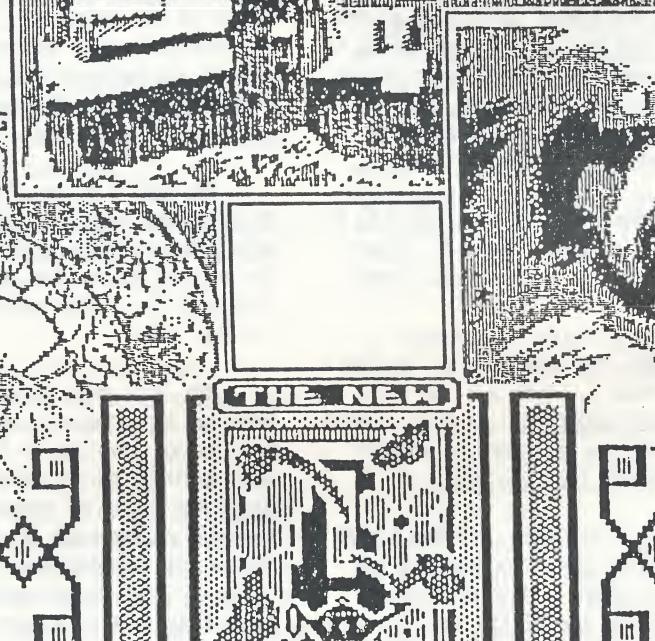
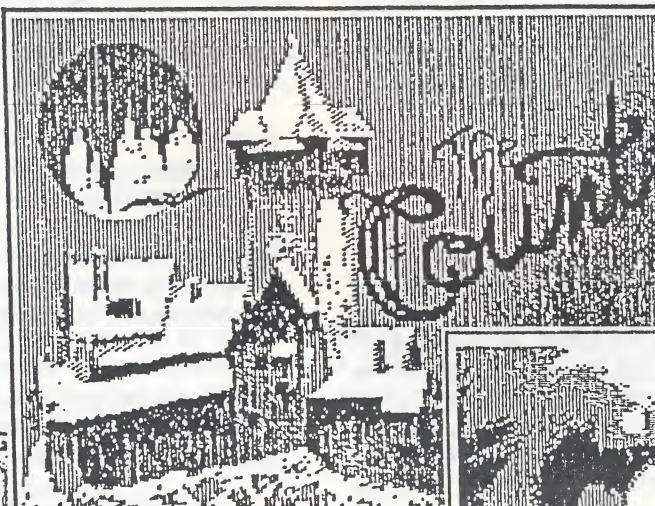
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L O R D S O F C O N Q U E S T

Reviewed by Jack Holtzhauer

I'm not much of computer game player. My joystick dexterity approaches that of a slowly developing four-year-old (or a quickly aging senior citizen), so I'm quickly frustrated by arcade games. Adventure gaming? Whatever I enter after the "?" prompt always results in the appearance of a hideous grue or some such creature, my quick demise, and instructions to "reboot to play again!" I never bother. I'm an avid reader of M. Evan Brooks "BATTLE BYTES" column, but am more than a little intimidated by the apparent complexity of the war simulation games.

That doesn't leave me much to choose from, but a couple of weeks ago I ran across an Electronic Arts release that's just my cup of tea - LORDS OF CONQUEST. I guess it might fall within the widest definition of the war simulation genre, but just barely. It reminds me of RISK, an old board game I used to play with my children many years ago. Yes, a joystick is employed, but dexterity and speed of manipulation are not required - just simple cursor placement. I can handle that.

LORDS OF CONQUEST was designed and programmed by Eon Software, Inc., and is based on their "popular" board game "BORDERLANDS". The scenario is relatively simple. To quote from the manual, LORDS OF CONQUEST "... is a strategy game of territorial struggle ... (some) territories will be important and powerful, while others will be insignificant and weak ... some will be rich, some poor ... (some) contain resources like gold, horses, iron, coal, or timber, which you will work to acquire because of the powerful weapons they can buy ..."

Up to four players can participate. In the single player mode you are, of course, competing against the computer -- a formidable opponent. Action starts by each player selecting, in turn, one of the territories on the game map until all are chosen. The variety of game maps is endless. Twenty, each presenting differing tactical situations, are supplied on the reverse of the game disk. If you're not happy with one of those, you can ask the computer to generate a random map for you, or you can build your own.

The next step is to select your "stockpile" territory where all the resources produced by your other holdings are stored. Protect it well. Should it fall into enemy hands, your stockpile is captured by the bad guys and your bank account falls to zero.

From this point on action proceeds in yearly phases, each involving:

Development: During this phase you use the resources in your stockpile to build cities, weapons or boats, all of which have varying defensive and offensive weights.

Cities also double the production output of that territory and all adjoining friendly territories.

Production: Your territories containing resources such as gold, iron, etc., produce and their output is placed in your stock pile for use during your next development phases.

Shipment: During this phase you're allowed to move one horse, weapon, horse and weapon, or boat to another friendly territory.

Conquest: During this phase you are allowed two attacks on adjoining enemy territories. The computer determines the outcome of the battles using a formula based upon the weight of the number of friendly territories adjoining the territory under attack plus the number of horses, weapons and boats in the attacking territories versus similar points for the targeted enemy territory and its adjoining friendly territories.

The yearly cycle of development, production, shipment and conquest phases repeat, with the order of each player's move rotating, until one of the opponents has been wiped off the map or one of the contenders has developed the number of cities previously determined to win the game.

When more than two players are competing, another facet of the conquest phase comes into play - alliances. Parties not involved in the current conflict, but who have holdings bordering on the targeted territory, are given the option of remaining neutral, or joining the struggle on the side of either the attacker or defender. You've got to watch your back here. Alliances are only valid for that single move and shift frequently. The final battle is often won by the most devious of the contenders.

Also, when two or more players are competing an additional phase is included in the yearly cycle - TRADING. During this phase, players may trade resources with one another - i.e. Boardwalk for Illinois Avenue.

There are four levels of game play. At the BEGINNER's level only two resources are available - gold and horses. The INTERMEDIATE level has five resources - gold, horses, iron, coal and timber. The ADVANCED level also has five resources, but allows boat building, which, of course, permits amphibious attacks. The EXPERT level includes all the elements of the advanced level and adds the SHIPMENT round to the yearly cycle.

There are nine levels of difficulty permitted when playing solitaire against the computer. They range from giving you the first choice of territories, first attack

and four extra territories to giving the same advantages to the computer.

The program also allows you several other game-play options. Resources may be set at either a low, mid or high level. The higher the level, the faster development will occur.

You can set the number of cities needed to win the game from three to six. If one or more players reach the winning level at the same time, the game continues until one of the contenders builds another city or one of the contenders cities is lost to an aggressor's attack.

The CHANCE LEVEL in determining the outcome of attacks and production of resources can also be set prior to commencing the game. If the level is set to LOW, all battles will be decided strictly on the basis of the strength of the opposing forces (ties going to the aggressor), and only the birth of new horses will be a random event.

If the chance level is set to MEDIUM, occurrences of production, trade and shipping are also random. During attacks, ties are determined randomly and, if you lose, forces brought into the attack are lost.

If the chance level is set to HIGH, the conditions of the medium setting will prevail except that during battles the winner is determined on a random basis in proportion to the strengths of the opposing forces.

The program also allows you to save a game in progress to a formatted data disk and to save game maps you may have generated through use of the MAP MAKER option.

All in all, LORDS OF CONQUEST is a pretty complete package allowing the user to set the degree of difficulty to his liking. It's single double-sided disk is packaged in the familiar Electronics Arts folder with a ten-page manual and folding reference card. The manual tells you all you have to know and offers a few hints on strategy. Beware - color monitor/TV required.

THE NEW ALADDIN (Continued from Page 24)

It was on the 130XE, he wanted to know what changes had been made in the chips and what it cost to make the XE "perform in this mode." He was told that there were "no changes, the publication was written in BASIC, and the annual subscription cost less than \$100." Rumor has it he asked that it be marketed for the ST as well. (Disk Publication plans to do so beginning in December '86. And, those of you who own both an 8-bit as well as the ST can request to have your subscription automatically switched to the ST version once it becomes available.)

While the graphics I've seen don't yet rival the

resolution on the ST, future issues are breaking some new grounds. One issue contains an interactive fiction experience in which several separate authors were presented with a scenario and each wrote his own interpretation of the story, giving it a vast assortment of story direction possibilities. The Halloween issue, Vol. 1.2, contains a Dracula story that begins with sepia-toned older magazine-style pictures and gothic-style print. As the story progresses, the display evolves to emulate an old movie and continues until the reader finds himself in the midst of solving a color graphics adventure with a mission of rescuing the heroine, Korin, from the evil grasp of the Count. Actors from the Dallas Theatre Center were utilized (and digitized) for this undertaking and the results are, I'm told, quite impressive.

As mentioned earlier, THE NEW ALADDIN is available by subscription for \$79.95 a year. (Credit card subscribers may do so by phone, calling 214-788-4441 -- COLLECT!) At three disks per issue, you'll receive 18 disk-sides of entertainment a year for a fraction over \$2.00 each.

In speaking with those at THE NEW ALADDIN, John Henson -- Editor-In-Chief -- reiterated that Disk Publication's goal is to provide an "entertainment, informative, and literary publication that allows user interaction." From what I've seen so far, they have more than exceeded their goal.

THE NEW ALADDIN, Disk Publications, Inc., P.O. Box 515468, Dallas, TX 75251-9990

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FIGHT NIGHT

Reviewed by Bill and David Agler

FIGHT NIGHT is a boxing simulation game for the 8-bit Atari. It combines a requirement for skill, imagination, strategy and fast reflexes into one double-sided program disk.

After booting the program you are presented with an interesting color picture of the boxing stadium entrance and menu options. Selecting the Information option shows you the convenience controls (to pause the game, turn music on/off, restart game) or program credits. Selecting "Fight Night" gives you the five major options: MAIN EVENT, CONSTRUCTION, TRAINING, SPARRING and TOURNAMENT.

MAIN EVENT: **FIGHT NIGHT** has five different characters with which you can "duke it out." Each fighter has varied degrees of skill, intelligence, power and resistance to injury. At one end of the spectrum is "Dip Stick", described as "small but slow . . . a mouth breather . . . got his start as a washroom attendant but quickly rose through the ranks . . . product of fixed fights . . . specializes in kidney shots, low blows." At the other end of the spectrum is the "Bronx Bomber", who has the "legs of Louis, the arms of Ali, the body of Braddock and the trunks of Frederick's of Hollywood."

This main event option is where your skill and reflexes are required. You control every move of your fighter with the joystick. There are eight options to use (4 primary positions of the joystick with fire button up or down):

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Throw a jab | 5. Put your guard up |
| 2. Throw a body blow | 6. Put your guard down |
| 3. Fake a jab | 7. Move right |
| 4. Fake a body blow | 8. Move left |

Your computer-controlled opponent has the same options, of course, plus each of them has a different "superblow" that they sneak in on you, sometimes with devastating results. They can be beaten however, especially by the fast reflex types (which is why this article is being jointly written by people whose ages are nearly a factor of four apart).

The documentation gives some good hints on scoring, action timing and strategy. You should study the strengths and weaknesses of your opponents and use them to your advantage. Also, you will pick up on such things as the split-second hesitation your opponent has when a solid punch is landed. This hesitation can be used to land multiple punches.

The scoring is a complicated set of calculations with each type of punch having a different point value and a different "resistance" value for each blow. Also, stepping into a punch gives a greater value. If the

opponent's guard is up when a Jab is delivered or down when a body blow is thrown, no points are scored.

The MAIN EVENT goes up to 3 rounds of 3 minutes each, assuming there is no knock-out.

CONSTRUCTION: This is where the imagination comes in. With this option you can build (and SAVE) your own boxer for later competition. You select his (yes "his" -- there is no equal opportunity here) physical appearance and abilities. The abilities are punching power, resistance, time spent on offense vs. defense, and brains. You choose the options by specifying percentages. Power and resistance are specified as percentages for the head vs. the body. Intelligence is defined as the percentage of time the boxer spends using his brains vs. taking action. You must also name your creation to SAVE it to disk and specify whether he is to be manually or computer controlled.

TRAINING: If you think, as I did, that using the eight joystick options is hard to learn then this option will help you. The screen displays a graphic representation of your joystick and then shows you which option is being executed. You can practice your moves with the aid of the computer by following its lead and executing each command when told to do so. This can be very frustrating so, thank goodness, there is an adjustable speed option here.

SPARRING: With this option you can call up any two boxers and fight with them or watch them fight. A second player here can use a second joystick to participate in the battle.

TOURNAMENT: This is simply a screen which shows a single elimination tournament diagram in which you can place the name of any of the boxers you have created or the original five boxers. They then proceed to have a tournament.

CONCLUSION: This is an interesting sports simulation program that should provide many hours of enjoyment. The graphics are quite good and the skill needed to beat the champion is significant, though attainable. There is a lot to each of the program options and loading and disk flipping can be a minor, but necessary, irritation. One thing we want to pass on about this program. Don't make your decision about its desirability by watching somebody else play it. The action appears to be slow moving. But, nothing could be further from the truth for the player. He or she is making split-second decisions on which of the 8 moves to make at any instant. It is an intense game for the players. We recommend it to any sports simulation enthusiast.

LEADER BOARD

A Golf Simulation for the 8-bit Atari

Reviewed by Jack Holtzhauer

If you've had a chance to read Frank Sommers' review of the ST version of this blockbuster (CN-SEP/86), turn the page 'cause the differences are few. If not, read on. You should have this one in your library.

If the graphics of the XL/XE release are not awesome, they're unquestionably very good. The playability? Merely sensational! But I guess we should start at the beginning, shouldn't we.

When first booting up, you're asked to enter the names of up to four players and their skill levels - novice, amateur or professional (more on this later). You then select which of the four 18-hole courses furnished with the program you wish to play and how many holes - up to 72. You can play all 72 on the same course, 18 on each of the four, or any combination you like.

After the administrative chores are concluded, you're off to the first tee armed with a full set of fourteen clubs, including 1, 3 and 5 woods, 1/9 irons, a pitching wedge and, of course, your favorite putter.

The view on the monitor places you in back of a nattily dressed golfer looking down the fairway towards the flag, a range of snow-capped mountains in the background. The number and par for the hole are displayed in the upper right corner. The golfers are listed along the right edge of the screen with their strokes for the current hole and their total strokes under or over par. The wind indicator and digital timer (elapsed time on course) are also located thereabouts, and the "POWER/SNAP" indicator is in the lower right corner.

You pick-up your driver, use your joystick to position the aiming cross-hairs to your liking and press and hold the fire button to start your backswing. Be alert now! You have to release the fire button at the proper instant to get just exactly the right amount of power in your swing. Stay alert! You've got to hit the fire button again just as the club meets the ball - get that wrist snap just right! A little too soon - your ball hooks off to the left. A little too late, and the ball slices to the right. Fire button, release, fire button! A satisfying "whoosh" from your speaker as the ball arcs down the fairway, bounces a couple of times, and rolls to a stop.

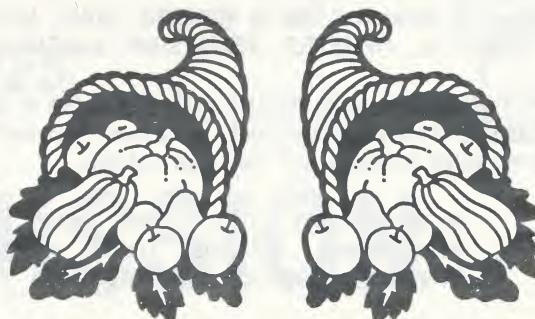
Hmm. Not bad. Only 67 yards to the pin. Out comes the wedge. The manual says max distance with this club is 83 yards. The wind indicator shows a pretty heavy blow running diagonally from the right and towards

me. Better aim to the right and try close to max power. Fire button. Release. Fire button. Whoosh! The ball arcs high and well to the right of the pin, but begins to drift to the left as the wind catches it. Bounce. Short roll.

The scene changes. I'm on the green with my putter in my hand. My ball lies 17 feet slightly downhill from the pin, with the green sloping sharply to the left. The power indicator has now changed configuration and is now marked in power increments ranging from 0 to 64 feet (level ground). I'm putting up hill. Let's try a power rating of 22. Careful now. Aim well to the right. Fire button. Release. Pop. The ball rolls towards the pin, but off towards the right -- it starts to straighten out -- and then curves to the left. It looks good. Darned good! It's gonna go in! A birdie! No such luck. I chocked and left it short four inches. A quick fire and release to tap it in. Plunk! Well, a par's not bad for the first hole. But I didn't do that well on the following seventeen, finishing eight over par. That's okay. I'll play another round when the wife hits the sack.

Players ranked as novices do not suffer slices or hooks (no wrist snap/second fire button required) and their shots are not affected by the wind. All their shots go right down the fairway exactly where aimed. Amateurs can slice or hook, but are not affected by the wind. Professionals are affected by all the vicissitudes of the game. You say you don't want to play a course, just practice your swing. Press "R" from the menu screen and go to the range where you can practice with any of your clubs.

The XL/XE version doesn't have sand traps and roughs as does the ST release. All shots off the fairway fall into the water. But otherwise, the 8-bit release comes off very well. LEADER BOARD is fun. It comes on a single-sided disk. A software key is also furnished and must be plugged into joypad #2. The manual includes schematics of the holes on the four courses supplied with the disk. Try it. I think you'll like it.



ATARIFEST

Listed below are the club-sponsored displays scheduled as of press time (October 20).

XL/XE DEMONSTRATIONS

EDUCATION ROOM (Fairfax County Schools) [Rm A-24]

Educational software, approved for and used in the Fairfax County Schools, for grades K through 12 will be on display and available for hands-on use. Educators will be available in the room to answer questions. Periodic LOGO demonstrations will also be scheduled.

GAME-ROOM (NOVATARI) [Rm A-12]

Continuous video tapes of recent 8 bit game software releases and live demonstration of war games, adventure games and Public Domain software available in the NOVATARI library. Variety of recent releases available for hands on demonstration.

HARDWARE-EXPOSITION (NCAUG) [Rm A-22]

Combination static display and demonstration of ATARI hardware and third party modifications ranging from the 400 and 810 to the 130XE and 1050.

VOICE-SYNTHESIS (FACE) [Rm A-11]

Demonstrations of voice synthesis hardware and software including Voice Master, Allen Voice Box, S.A.M. and related Poker S.A.M. and Chatter Bee, and RAM talker

WORD-PROCESSING/HOME PRODUCTIVITY (AURA) [Rm A-34]

Demonstration of spreadsheet, data base, and word processing software and home applications.

Word Processing 11am, 12, and 1:30pm

Spread Sheets 11:30am, 12:30am, and 2pm

Data Base 1pm, and 2:30pm

ST DEMONSTRATIONS

GAME ROOM (NOVATARI) [Rm A-27]

On-going demos of some of the latest ST games including Time Bandits, Ultima III, Silent Service, King's Quest, and more.

GRAPHICS (NOVATARI) [Rm A-17]

On-going demonstrations of NEOCHROME, DEGAS, NVISION, DEGAS-ELITE, TYPESETTER, RUBBER STAMP, and EASY DRAW.

WORD-PROCESSING/HOME PRODUCTIVITY (AURA) [Rm A-38]

Demonstration of spreadsheet, data base, and word processing software and home applications.

Word Processing 11am, 12, and 1:30pm

Spread Sheets 11:30am, 12:30am, and 2pm

Data Base 1pm, and 2:30pm

LANGUAGES (NOVATARI) [Rm A-29]

Questions about some of the new ST languages available? Come to the language room to learn about C, FORTH, PASCAL, and MODULA-2.

JOINT XE/ST ROOMS

PRINTER-ROOM (WACUG) [Rm A-31]

On going demonstrations of dot matrix, letter quality (1027 and daisy wheel) printers, and plotters (1020 and COMREX) operating with 8 and 16 bit equipment for graphic, word processing, and printer-oriented software. In depth demonstration of XLENT PRINTWARE software available in the adjoining room [Rm A-33].

TELECOMMUNICATIONS (NOVATARI) [Rm A-13]

An on-going demonstration of modem and bulletin board programs in operation. Demonstrations to include video tape material and real-time operation demonstration using ST and 8-bit systems.

COMMERCIAL EXHIBITORS

We have at least twenty commercial exhibitors scheduled so far. Those confirmed at press time are:

Applied Computer Associates

David Belfeld

Black Patch Systems

Buzzword Game Co.

Cal Com Inc.

Computer Service Land

Data Pacific, Inc.

Digital Arts

DISKcovery

The Electronic Clinic

Full Spectrum Computers

Games Computers Play

L & Y Electronics

Legacy A/V Productions

MichTron Inc.

Micro Marketing International

MicroCube Corp.

Morgan Communication Products

Progressive Computer Applications

Shelbourne Software

XLent Software

SWAPFEST (The Atarifest Flea Market - Rm A-37)

Space will be provided for WAACE members to display their surplus hardware and legally resalable software. (Please erase your back-up copies, but don't bring them). There will NOT be any early admissions to the show for Swapfest set-up.

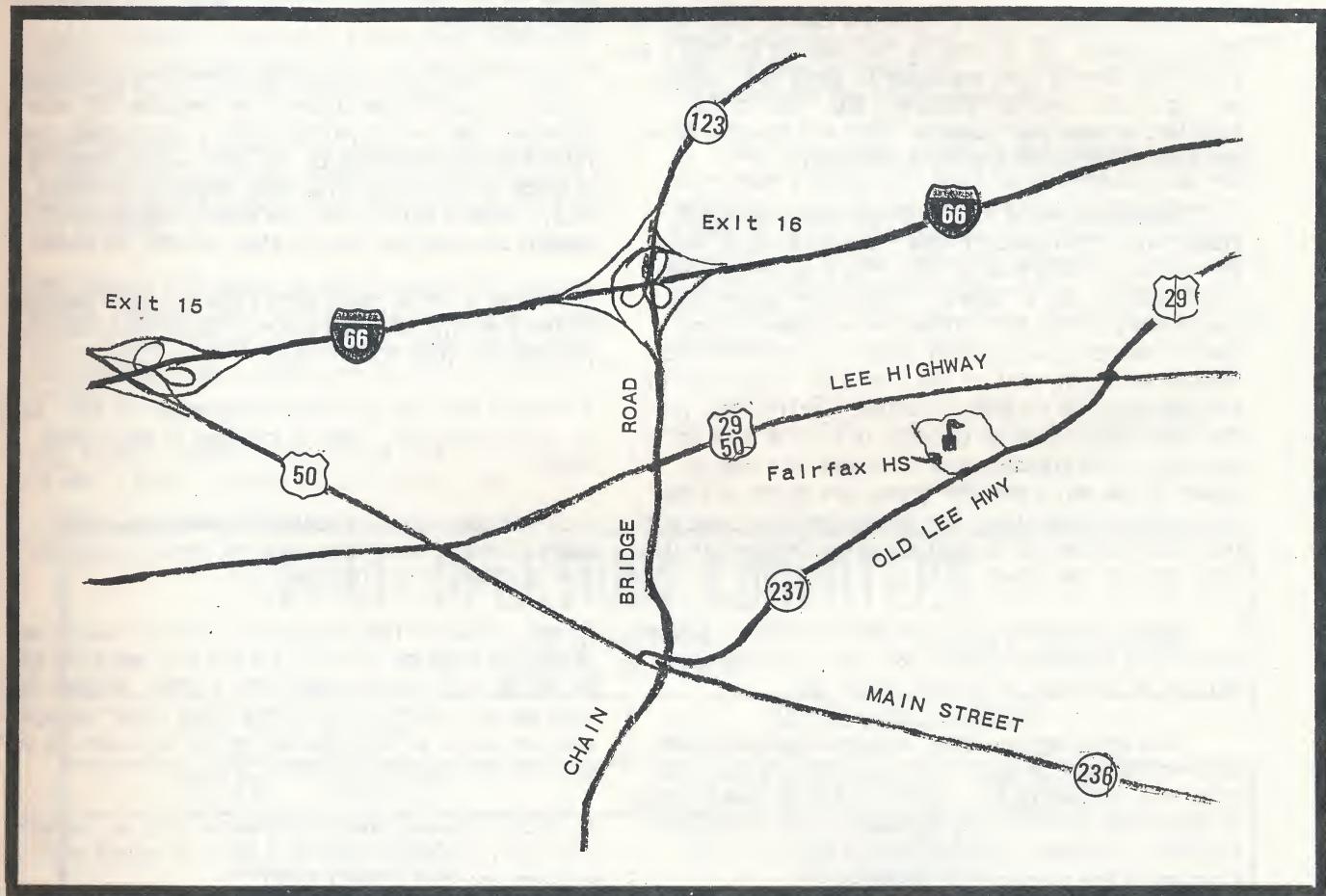
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DOOR PRIZES



FREE ADMISSION

Accent on Basic Computing

by Ron Peters

Now that you completely understand databases (last article), let's talk about DOS and how it's the "secretary" for your disk drive. And, for our purposes, we'll confine our remarks to Atari DOS, since that's the one most of us use.

First of all, DOS stands for Disk Operating System, and is merely a series of programs that allows you to use a disk drive for storing and retrieving information with your computer. Do you need DOS to use a computer? No, not if you plan to store your data on a cassette tape, or not store it at all.

Since a computer has a volatile memory; that is it only "remembers" for as long as the power is on (don't we all!), you have to have someplace to store your letters, mailing lists, kinky art pictures, etc. DOS is the interface between your computer (CPU) and the disk drive, and acts as a traffic cop and a secretary.

The disk drive is like (analogy time!) a record player, with the record (floppy disk) rotating at about 288 rpm (Atari 1050 disk drive). The disk drive, like a record player, has a "tone arm" that moves across the record and picks up the information -- however, our special record player arm can "play" and "record" your information on any part of the record as it spins by the arm (the disk has a table of contents section that tells the "arm" where to go on the disk to get the data you've selected). The computer disk is housed in a special jacket so you won't get your greasy paw prints all over it (the disk spins within the jacket) and the "tone arm" reads the information through a slotted "window" at the lower part of the jacket.

Petunia (remember her?) has been trained to jump on and off the record at exactly 288 rpm. Vary the speed and she is in danger of falling on her DOS.

The disk drive can "play" only one disk at a time, so the disks must be kept in a separate, safe location (disk file of some type). Unless your kids have invaded, in which case the disks may be found on top of the TV, microwave, telephone, space heater, window sill, or floating in the bathtub (all NO-NO's).

Each disk is divided into sections (sectors), and each sector will hold 128 pieces of information (Byte). If you are using Atari DOS 2.0, each disk will hold about 90,000 bytes of information (a byte is usually one character). Other DOS's will format (prepare) a disk so that the information is packed in more tightly (density) and thus hold more files, programs, and data (Atari DOS 2.5 will allow you to store about 130,000 characters on a disk).

Let's continue with the saga of Petunia, our trusty secretary that last month ran a filing race with a

database program (and should have stayed with filing her nails). Now Petunia is wearing another hat, called DOS (no, that doesn't stand for Defunct Office System). With this hat on, Petunia is going to run between your computer and this disk drive, carrying files and other information you will need.

At your request, Petunia can perform the following for you:

- * Give you the names of the files and programs on the disk including the amount of space each one takes (in sectors), and the total amount of space left on the disk. (DISK DIRECTORY)
- * She'll also run to the Xerox machine and make copies of any file and either place it on the same disk under a different name -- for you see Petunia can't handle two files with the same name on the same disk -- (COPY FILE), or place it on another disk under any name (DUPLICATE FILE). Also a point often overlooked, the COPY FILE command can send the copy to disk, printer, or screen.
- * Without a lot of extra effort she can Xerox the whole contents of this disk and place it on another disk of your choice. (DUPLICATE DISK)
- * Petunia can find any Binary program on the disk, carry it to your computer, load it and make it run (BINARY LOAD)
- * If you want any file sealed (or unsealed) so the contents cannot be altered, she can easily accomplish this (LOCK FILE) and (UNLOCK FILE).
- * And, if you're real nice to her, she will make a copy of the DOS programs (DOS.SYS and DUP.SYS) and place them on another disk for you (WRITE DOS FILES). Without these programs on a disk, you will be a "boot error" message when you start up the computer (with some exceptions that might be the subject of another article).
- * Petunia can also clean a whole new disk, or reclean a previously used disk, making it ready to accept your programs and data (FORMAT DISK).
- * What's more, Petunia can put a new label on a file (RENAME FILE), or even find a file and throw it in the trash (DELETE FILE).

There are other functions that Petunia (DOS) will do for you, like LOAD AT ADDRESS, SAVE AT ADDRESS, etc., but these are for the high-techies. And, the Atari computer will let you use up to eight different disk drives so you won't have to be swapping disks all the time.

Oh, I almost forgot, if you don't need Petunia for awhile, she will turn the control over to a cartridge or

a BASIC program (RUN CARTRIDGE), and go back to filing her nails. When you are ready, she'll also SAVE< or LOAD your BASIC programs.

That Petunia is a pretty handy person, eh? If my secretary were that efficient, I'd have to pay her more money. However, she still has trouble jumping on and off a platform spinning at 288 rpm.

Next time ... let's talk about how a word processor is like your own typewriter and printer, with Petunia standing by with scissors, paste, a wastebasket, and a Xerox machine.

GLOSSARY

DOS: A bunch of programs (DOS.SYS and DUP.SYS) that allows you to have total control over your disk drive.

FORMAT: A system of preparing a disk so that DOS can store files and programs on it. (If you FORMAT a disk with data on it, kiss that data goodbye).

BINARY PROGRAM: A computer program that has undergone a "translation" into binary format (using only numbers 0 and 1), since the computer only has two toes and this is how it counts.

BYTE: Refers to a specific unit of space in a computer memory, normally equal to one character (letter, number, etc.) A byte is made up of 8 bits, each bit being a binary number 0 or 1 (like a switch that is either "on" or "off").

BIT: A small "nibble", less than a byte. It takes 8 bits to make a byte, but only 1 bit to ruin a disk.

SYNCALC AND THE HAPPY DRIVE

By Bill Agler

Watch out for the fast write option when using Syncalc and a 1050 drive with a Happy hardware modification.

As an avid stock market follower and mutual fund investor I have spent countless hours entering historical data into a Syncalc spreadsheet for calculation and manipulation. I had five years of weekly closings for the Dow Jones and Standard and Poors indices which I updated weekly, in addition to similar information on selected mutual funds. I got tired of the long load and save times so I invested in a 1050 with a Happy hardware modification. The data then LOADED much faster and SAVED much faster too (when the fast write option was enabled). Even the sector copier used to make my backup was much faster (everyone knows that files reflecting so much work should always be backed up). My 800XL (with Newell Industries 256 Ram Board) was humming!

Imagine my surprise when I next loaded the file to do my weekly update and found my spreadsheet completely messed up. I think the data was all there, but small blocks of it was scattered out of order all over the spreadsheet. It was completely useless. It was also a complete surprise because there was no indication of a problem when the SAVE took place. Needless to say, the backup was in the same shape.

Anybody out there have what I lost? I'd sure appreciate hearing from you, care of CURRENT NOTES.

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From I95 take Rt. 234 toward Dumfries. Turn right on Rt. 1 and go approx. 1 mile to FULL SPECTRUM on the right. Next to Dumfries Discount House.

Tips'N'Traps

by Stevenson & Burke

NEVERENDING STORY

Q. I've found the Luckdragon, but does anyone know what to do from there? Or, when you go east into the mountains (or is it west?), is there any way to get into that tunnel in the rock?

-"Red October"

A. Well, if you've been everywhere and found the branch, you need to use the camp fire to light the branch, then you go to the crack and light the thorns.

-BIII Mehojah

Q. Does anyone know how I get to the second level???

-BIII Mehojah

ULTIMA IV

Q. Can someone PLEASE tell me when the lighter-than-air device (hot-air balloon) is in hythloth, please?

-"Zero the Hero"

A. It's not IN hythloth. You go in the castle of Britanla, go all the way down to level 8, move around, find a different ladder going up, work your way out or cast x-it spell. You wind up on the Isle of the abyss, with the balloon next to you.

-"Barracks Rat"

Q. I already know where nightshade is but I need to find out where mandrake root is.

-Andrew Patton

A. Unless I've gotten nightshade and mandrake crossed up in the three months or so since playing the game, you need to find some special swamp(s). There are a couple of places: one is south and east of Minoc in the Bloody Plains. It's a lonely little patch of swamp. Another is an island just off the coast north of Trinsic (I think). As usual, you need a REALLY dark night! Happy hunting!

-Richard Gunter

ENCHANTER

Q. I finally figured out how you're supposed to kill the wizard, but I can't get through the maze. I've been through every room in that castle, and I still haven't found the map! Any help out there??

-Robert Menton

A. The map is in the MAP ROOM. The only way to get through the door is to let the adventurer lead the way.

-Paul Mattia

Q. What's the roller coaster and flume for?

-James Bailey

A. As my failing memory serves me, it offers you a chance to see some mines where troglodites are working. That's about all I can remember about it.

-"Barracuda"

SORCERER

Q. In Sorceror, what do you do in the amusement park and what is the waxer for?

-James Bailey

A. You need the potion of strength to throw the ball at the bunny. And then you go and pull the lever at the jackpot, until you get the coin. The coins for the gate.

-"Mister Merlin"

Q. How do I survive the opening gambit without starving?

-"Oren"

A. You go all the way south. First you get out of your room. Then you go either east or west and take the vial, then you open it and drink the potion. And then take the matchbook and put it in the mailbox and you will get a potion. When the bell rings it's there!

-"Mister Merlin"

Q. Where's the potion of strength?

-James Bailey

HACKER

Q. I thought I was doing pretty well in Hacker until hitting a dead-end on the last lap. I can get all the pieces of the message, but I always run out of time on my way to deliver it to Washington. I don't think I've been dawdling, so how come I always get zapped? If I could get all the pieces without ever being spotted by the satellite, would it give me more time, or is there some other solution I've missed?

-Larry Franks

SAIGON: THE FINAL DAYS

Q. I'm stuck at blown gun nest. Have listened to radio. Any hints?

-Michael Pollak

EIDOLON

Q. Does anyone out there know how to get past the second dragon in Eldolon?

-Jim Stevenson Jr.

UNIVERSE

Q. Does anybody know the location of the hyperspace booster or don't you ever get back to Earth?

-Alex Karlsen

THE CODEX

Q. Does anyone know the answer to the question that the computer asks you in the Codex chamber after it asks for the password?

-Dan Greenblatt

BLACK CAULDRON

Q. In the Black Cauldron hint book, I read a question that said, "I have climbed the special tree and have taken the prize, what next?". I would like to know where the Morva marsh the special tree is located.

-"Need Help"

KING'S QUEST II

Q. Am I supposed to kill the snake on the mountain? If so, how?

-"Need Help"

WIZARD'S CROWN

Q. I'm looking for the password to enter the temple in the ruins. How about it?

-Pete Kilcullen

MASK OF THE SUN

Q. What's the pswrd to get by the two heads that talk? And how do you get past the two skeletons to get the silver, and how (exactly) do I get the urn in place to open the door? One more thing, what's the falling boulder? It never falls.

-"Mister Merlin"

BALLYHOO

Q. I can't get passed the tite-rope act. I have the pole for it but always drop it climbing the ladder. I haven't played it in a while since I accidentally deleted it but I'm getting another copy. Any advice?

-"Craig Wave"

MONTEZUMA'S REVENGE

Q. Yes it's an old game. But who has solved Montezuma's Revenge? If so, how? I have gone through every screen and even touched montezuma but nothing happened! How do you win the game?

-"Flaming Carrot"

A. Once you get as far as the giant (that big guy who stomps on the floor and makes the floor jump), you have to go all the way back to the central choice screen and

start over from there. It's a major pain! P.S.- You've gotten the torch right!

-David Bell

Jim Stevenson got his Atari computer about 5-6 years ago and has been working on adventures ever since. Main editor of Tips 'N' Traps for almost two years, Jim is also head of the adventure message bases on ARMUDIC and the Electronic Age BBS. Jim prefers graphics-based (and some text depending on subject) adventures. He owns books on about 90% of all text and graphics adventures for almost any kind of computer. Jim, who recently got his 520 ST, intends to keep Tips 'N' Traps going for quite a while yet for adventurers of all kinds.

Barry Burke's first experience with adventure games was on his friend's VIC-20 five years ago. The game was Scott Adam's ADVENTURELAND. Barry consequently got his own computer (an Atari 800 in 1979) and has gone on to solve all of the Scott Adam's series and many Infocom, Sierra On-Line, Activision, and other adventures. He prefers text-only adventures but, likes some of the graphic ones, too. He bought an Atari 520 ST last December, and his adventure solving is still going strong.

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ST Update

by Sommers & Waters

STOCKWARE

ATARI PUBLIC ISSUE -- On 31 October or "later" Atari Corp. will go public (see Bob Kelley's insightful analysis of Atari's prospectus for the offering in this issue.) Why "later"? At the moment Atari is purportedly undergoing the requisite audit before such an offering. Not a pro forma undertaking, particularly for a company which has done a herculean job of swimming upstream with minimal funding, initially non-existent new product, and a market that was anti-computer. So to ferret out the paper, the why's and how's of why "that" and "this" was possible and back it up with documentation (something Atari is notoriously thin on) is possibly as much of a "hat trick" as producing the ST was. Expectations are that if the audit is not completed by the end of October then by sometime in the month of November. But see Kelley and his lead article which deals in numbers and facts. Sig Hartman was quoted in mid-October as numbering the Atari machines shipped in the near 300,000. If you heard or read this, don't be jarred by Kelley's underlining in the stock prospectus that as of September 15 (date of prospectus) 150,000 ST machines had been shipped. Hartman's number totals all machines, including the XL, XE series plus game computers.

HARDWARE

IBM EMULATOR -- Out by the end of February 1987! Have you heard that before? Yes, here in the issue before last, when we guessed that Atari's hopes were optimistic for Xmas. In a purposeful effort to maximize compatibility and increase speed they have, at this juncture, decided to add card slots. With 512 K ROM aboard and using the 8088 chips instead of the V 20's from NEC they expect to sell the box for \$299. For those of you who share our admiration for how Shiraz and his R&D group get what they do out of the electronic air in California and put it into boxes for us to use, you'll appreciate that creating a "clone" in a box for the IBM that will run "everything" or as much of everything as you can get it to, you have to cut somewhere, and in this instance it may be speed - 20% less in some programs that are heavily graphics oriented. No additional word on the drive size, 5.25 or 3.5.

MAGIC SACK -- With luck those of you reading this and also attending the November 8th ATARIFEST, will see the secret inside the sack in full operation. There have been reports here and in Canada that bugs abound and that the Magic Cartridge is cracked and runs but a few Macintosh programs. Your eyes will tell you differently. Bugs that did exist in the first run have been removed. The software disk accompanying the cartridge lists the Mac programs that run and those, mostly by third party, that don't. The average is about half and half. Part of

the problem is the way the screen I/O is handled. Those calls that send a pointer directly to memory have problems. The aspect ratio on the screen tends to be off to one side slightly. That being some of the observations, we will be interested to see how long the cartridges last at the Atarifest. At San Jose's fair, the first day saw the supply of 200 quickly exhausted. On the second day, 400 went before the end of the day. The price is \$129 for the kit, parts to be assembled. And \$149 for the cartridge with a time clock and cable for transporting programs from a Mac to the ST. As we noted it runs only on a monochrome screen and requires a printer driver to run on printers other than an Image Writer.

DRIVES -- Some of you may have seen them. Two arrived in the mid-Atlantic area last month. Two what? Two Atari 20 meg hard drives. Electronic Clinic in Bethesda was peacock proud that they had received both of them. The number since has expanded. But fast on their heels, comes Supra with bigger meg boggling power. Their 20 meg drive runs about 30% faster than the Atari. Now they have a Supra 60 meg drive that will run 3 1/2 times faster than the 20 meg drive, and about 3 times more expensive at \$2000. We are told that one of the reasons Atari has not been able to drop their cost below Supra is because of the controller which they purchase. They are now developing their own controller which once available could drop the cost from \$100-300. Tape back ups are coming fast. Supra will soon have a 20 meg back-up tape for the same price as the drive, \$799. Atari is coming forth with a 10 meg tape for \$250. (Those of you who, like myself, thought this will only do half the job, remember: 2 tapes equals 20 meg.)

BLITTERING STILL -- Yes, the blitter game is still going on. Jimmy the Greek's 2nd cousin, twice removed, was giving odds at the end of last month that the Colorado company would beat Atari to the blitter wall. Odds dropped, as reports emerged that the blitter package would be out in the beginning of November, actually end of October. A ROM kit and blitter chip would be sold to the dealer for \$120; so when you pay \$149 or slightly more realize your struggling dealer is offering more of a service than seeking a profit from this item. The chip itself has been tightly controlled; no release to developers. This of course will commence immediately upon shipping and converting software to utilize its 500% increase in graphics speed should not be complex or time consuming. (Remember when you heard that about transporting programs over to the ST back then? The process involved here, we are told, is markedly simpler.)

WIDE ANGLE SCREENS -- Your monitor is deceiving you. It hides the beauty of its full breadth by at least a

portion of an inch all around the screen. The University of Maryland has "beautifulled" its several dozen ST monitors by "tweaking" five set screws inside the back of the monitor, enlarging the screen to within 1/4" of the screen edge. John Antonianedes will have a description next month on how this miracle is possible.

SOFTWARE

HATS OFF AWARD -- This month's HOA goes to Legacy Productions A.V. for the novel, effective, advancement in ST documentation. The 75 minutes video on how to use your ST and software that comes with it carries the banner up front for what software documentation could be. As we note elsewhere, hats off to you and your company, Jonathan R. Merrill. We look forward to your display at the ATARIFEST.

NEW STUFF -- To titillate, what about a word processor that talks to you. Rosetta Software has produced a program, "TALKER", that does just that. We are seeking it, in an effort to corner the market. Otherwise, CURRENT NOTES might too easily appear on audio cassette, and electronically we'd be back where we started in the Information/communication game. But we can't wait to see/hear and use it.

STAR GLIDER is here. It may not put the superior graphics of STAR RAIDERS, out by Xmas, to shame but its well-integrated action promises to make it a favorite for you interplanetary battlers who like your action here and now.

ZOOMRACKS!! hopefully will take us where our reviewer last month hoped; beyond "a step in the right direction" to a fully unique and utilitarian data base system. As a possible competitor, watch for Pam Frank's review of HABAVIEW next month.

Those of us who would dance on a desktop for a solid piece of such software, may not have to wait until XMAS. PUBLISHER'S PARTNER is the first genuine attempt to give the ST what the Macintosh has abounded with. A review of it will be yours asap.

START, the ANTIC disk magazine, has a little gem in the 2nd issue. A program that loads as an AUTO file and keeps your menus from hitting you on the head when you don't want them to. If the arrow accidentally touches the erogenous zone, no menu until you click the right button on the mouse.

FLIGHT SIMULATOR is reportedly a stunner. We hope to have Jack Lauer, CN author, who flies regularly into San Francisco for American Airlines, fly the simulator in for us and tell us what the difference is like in the next issue.

SOFTWARE IN A CARTRIDGE -- Two items are on the horizon, one advertised by QMI gives you everything that CORNERMAN does but without eating up your memory - clock,

calculator, address book, phone dialer, etc. The other is possibly more intriguing. MICROSOFT WRITER not on disk but cartridge. Possibly? The other end of this speculation is the word around that GST of England has decided not to support Atari's plans to issue FIRST WORD PLUS, which is out in England, but due to widespread passing around before its release, possibly won't appear here. A call to Atari and their new software rep, Gershon Bloomstein, to find out what was happening to FIRST WORD PLUS drew a sharp reaction and the statement, "I am not able to make comments to the press about products", followed by a sudden clicking off. Interesting to note that user group newsletter writers have become "press". What happened to the always helpful Richard Frick who used to field questions like that so ably in the past?

H&D BASE -- The reports are true that H&D BASE is no more. Those of you who require support may contact Dave Faroro, who wrote the program, at H&D Base Software, 1045 Matson Drive, Alburn, CA 95603, (916) 885-7973.

CHRISTMAS -- One final note, better than all the word out there is the word that Atari is working with that computer giant, Toys-R-Us, to sell the ST 520 with a single-sided drive for \$259 (no monitor, but able to run off your TV)! Wouldn't that be a nice present for those of you who have been planning to move up or switch?

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S T L A N G U A G E S

by John Antoniades

One of the nice things that happened to ST owners is the appearance of many different languages that allow all of us to make the best use of our computer power. But when one has a lot of choices, it becomes increasingly difficult to choose a specific language package.

In this article, I am going to attempt to try to point out the strengths and weaknesses of these languages and hopefully help make your decision a little easier. Note, however, that this is by no means a complete review of the existing packages.

Overview

Some of the languages available for the ST are:

1. Basic (Interpreted and Compiled)
2. Logo
3. C (Megamax, GST, ALCYON, Lattice, etc.)
4. Pascal (DSS-CCD, Metacomco, TDI UCSD, Prospero, etc.)
5. TDI MODULA-2
6. XLISP (Public Domain)
7. Fortran (Prospero, Philon, etc.)

The two most flexible languages for software development are C and MODULA-2. They allow the user to do low and high level programming easily, since they were both designed for operating system software development. The majority of the commercial software available on the ST is written in C, although some of the newer packages are developed with MODULA-2.

Pascal, C, MODULA-2 and XLISP are structured languages. This means that the programs follow a logical top-down sequence, which makes the programs easier to read and maintain. Fortran is a language aimed mostly at scientific applications. Basic was developed to introduce people to computer programming, but it is rapidly losing its audience to Pascal which was also developed for the same purpose. XLISP is an artificial intelligence object-oriented language which is widely used in expert system design (along with Prolog). Logo was designed for kids and that is what it is good for.

In my opinion, C and MODULA-2 are the best choices for software development, unless there is an application which is a natural for a specific language. This does not mean that other languages are not usable, but that they do not offer the facilities of C or MODULA-2.

The C Language

Let's take a look at C first. C was developed at Bell Labs as a system programming language for the UNIX operating system. C is usually tied very closely to the

operating system through sets of system-specific bindings to the system's utilities. The language is fairly standardized, resulting in highly portable applications. GEM was actually written in C for the IBM-PC. C offers a structured environment with facilities for easy manipulation of anything from single bits to long floating point numbers. The majority of the public domain and demonstration software is written in C and numerous other useful programs can be found in a huge selection of language tutorials and program library collections, giving the beginner a tremendous variety of examples, which are the best guide in learning a new language. Finally, the appearance of C extensions, such as C++ and Objective C allow the user to enter the world of object-oriented languages, which are becoming extremely popular lately (with very good reason).

There is a large variety of C compilers for the ST. Alcyon C is a part of the developer's kit. It comes bundled with a large set of utilities and documentation for \$300. Numerous benchmarks show that it produces very good compiled code.

Megamax C is a one pass system, meaning that compilation is extremely fast compared to other C's. It also does not seem to suffer from the inability to handle forward referencing. As far as the final executable file, Megamax seems to produce quite good code for most programs. It also provides one of the few nice pieces of GEM documentation in the ST market, as well as a reasonably complete development environment including an editor and resource construction set. This would be probably the best choice for a C compiler. Megamax seems to support the package quite well and has fixed numerous bugs found by the users. An imminent new version also promises removal of some limitations, such as the 32KB single block.

Another nice package, especially for UNIX fans is the Mark Williams C. Its major strengths are the optimizing compiler, its excellent documentation and its wealth of UNIX tools, such as Make, Microemacs, Archiver, DEBUGGER and many others. If you like to port UNIX software to the ST this is easily your choice. Since it is a multipass compiler, it is much slower than Megamax, and it does not have a Resource construction set. But it will give you bindings to every operating system routine, including the line A routines. A nice package indeed.

The MODULA-2 Language

MODULA-2 is a language developed by N. Wirth, the maker of Pascal. Since Pascal was developed strictly as a teaching language, Wirth decided to develop MODULA-2 as a truly powerful language for serious applications, while maintaining the look and feel of Pascal. Recent Pascal

extensions try to provide most of the MODULA features absent from Pascal, such as separate compilation, opaque-type definitions, open arrays and many others. MODULA was designed for large software systems that can be maintained and modified with great ease. It has certainly accomplished that as well as any other language, including ADA, which is one of the most powerful computer languages ever produced. MODULA-2 offers all of C's facilities for low as well as high level programming. And it goes beyond C, providing most of ADA's facilities in a much less complicated compiler which seems to produce the fastest code available on the ST. Program readability in MODULA-2 is one of its strengths. The language is almost self documenting. C programs are generally much harder to read than the ones in MODULA-2, and subsequently much harder to modify or maintain, and they are missing one of the most powerful features of modern languages, opaque types. The strong typechecking in MODULA-2 saves an enormous amount of debugging effort and results in faster program development. Finally, portability in MODULA-2 is excellent allowing program development in a variety of computer systems.

There is only one MODULA-2 package for the ST, TDI MODULA-2. Since it contains Wirth's compiler, it indeed seems to produce the best optimized code for the ST. The ST implementation has some bugs, but TDI is constantly updating it, providing more and more useful software tools. The developer's package contains all the necessary tools for program development, as in the case of Megamax C or the developer's kit. In addition it offers a high level application library which minimizes the horrors of GEM programming for new and advanced GEM programmers alike. Its weakest point is the documentation, which in many cases lacks necessary information especially for GEM subprograms. You definitely need additional documentation to be able to use the language and the GEM interface at all. Despite that, in my opinion it is the most powerful, modern and complete language available for the ST.

Other Languages

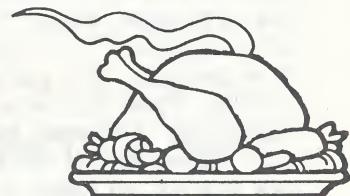
On the Pascal front, the package I am most familiar with is the OSS-CCD Personal Pascal. It is an excellent Pascal implementation with many language extensions added. OSS has also added a high-level, well-documented GEM library which makes this the best available package for people starting out in GEM. Its extremely low price makes it a must for anybody's software library. It also makes the transition to MODULA-2, for more serious applications, quite easy.

The Prospero Fortran compiler is a complete F77 compiler, with a lot of extensions and a GEM interface. It is an excellent choice for scientific software development, since a large part of the existing huge Fortran software base can easily be ported to the ST. And the price, at just over \$100 is a lot easier to take than the price of Fortran compilers on other personal

computers. Its language reference guide is quite good, but its GEM routine description is shorter than a telegram.

Summary

If you want a systems programming environment, your choice should probably be limited to one of the C packages (Alcyon, Megamax or Mark Williams) or the TDI MODULA-2. For learning purposes or less serious applications, OSS Pascal is your best and most economical bet. For scientific applications Pro-Fortran is a good choice. XLISP is free so why not get it, just in case you need it. Finally, if you like Basic, you may want to consider buying a good compiled Basic. Several have been reviewed in recent issues of CURRENT NOTES. Interpreters, however, although good for debugging, are painfully slow.



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REGENT WORD II

Faster, Fatter, and Smoother

Reviewed by Frank Sommers

"Fast, lean and smooth. A lightening-quick-to-learn, electronic bag of goodies." That was CURRENT NOTES said about REGENT WORD when it appeared a year ago. It was a favorite among many for its qualities, those things sought after by the new ST users. Now Son of REGENT WORD is here, a GEM drawdown word processor that switches from italic, to elite, to bold or elongated, or even miniature superscript before your very eyes. It is a dilly!

Regent Word II operates completely in the GEM environment and better yet what you see on the CRT is what you get on the printed page. Well almost — type fonts appear in pica size (10 cpi), but the five type styles show on the tube. Regent Word II is a major advance in word processing. It is simple to use, it is complete and it is powerful. With just a little effort, practise, and learning, anyone will be up and running and doing all those things, with ease, that have previously been difficult. Regent Word II can edit documents up to 200 columns wide and any number of lines that the RAM of your computer will hold. Horizontal and vertical scroll bars allow the edit work window to be easily moved around the document. There are five styles of print; bold, italics, subscript, superscript and underline. The limiting factor appeared to be the type of printer used, until we talked to the company. (See below.)

The menu bar lists DESK, FILE, EDIT, SEARCH, STYLE, SPECIAL and PRINT. The information line, which is below the window close box and document title line, displays status information about the current document. As you use Regent Word II the information line indicates the number of bytes free and lists the selected text effects, such as bold, italics, subscript, superscript and underline, which are in effect. The information line may at other times display the word count, calculator activities, block operation status, or page number.

A new innovation is the use of rulers. Rulers (colored red), control the margins, line spacing, type of font used and the page number, for that portion of the document that follows the ruler. Line margin 1 (LM1) controls the margin of the first line of the paragraph. LM1 can be set to a larger or smaller number than LM2 to cause an indent or outdent of the first line of each paragraph. This feature of Regent Word II is very slick and works easily and well. Line margin 2 (LM2) sets the margin for all the rest of the lines in the paragraph. Right margin (RM) sets the right margin. Line space (LS) sets the line spacing and I find it interesting that in addition to the normal settings of 1 or 2, LS may also be set to 1 1/2. The type font (FONT) used is the next part of the Ruler. (Explanation of this important portion of

the ruler in the documentation is inadequate.) There generally are at least four fonts available on a printer. On Epson and Epson-compatible printers the font numbers to be used are: 0 for pica, 1 for elite, 2 for compressed, and 3 for enlarged. You will probably have to experiment to find the numbers from 0 to 9 that fit your printer. Rulers may be inserted at any line throughout the document to control the material that follows the ruler. To add a ruler, place the cursor on the line the ruler is to occupy and click on INSERT RULER in the SPECIAL drop down menu. Once in place the parameters of the ruler can be changed to fit your needs. Ruler changes are made by clicking the arrow on the control number to be changed, the Information line requests the new control number to be entered, pressing the return key enters the new control number.

There seemed to be no way to access the printer drivers, (nineteen printer drivers in all). If you didn't have one of the listed printers or if your printer was not compatible with one of the listed printers, then you were forced to use the special printer command, Control X. Control X followed by any decimal value sends that value directly to the printer. This was useful for sending printer commands not included in the Regent Word II program, but far from satisfactory. For example, if you have need for the decimal commands to toggle on 1/8" line spacing and back to 1/6" line spacing, control X was the only way to accomplish this. Yet there was no mention of the use of CONTROL X in the documentation of Regent Word II.

A call to Regent Software seemed in order. The president of Regent Word, Frank Cohen was not only sympathetic but quite responsive. Within an hour he had checked with his programmer and called back to say that he and the programmer had agreed that an accompanying printer driver was required and they were commencing to prepare it as of our conversation. He also noted that a bug which caused printers to backspace after each letter, when bold print was used had also been discovered at the company and said he would forward an updated program as soon as possible. Less than 24 hours later the program arrived by Federal Express. Unfortunately, the bug was still evident, and the printer did a stutter dance across the page in bold print. Several days passed before we could call Regent again to announce this. Before we initiated a call, Frank Cohen called us. He explained that the update did not correct the bug for all printers, but the preceding Sunday evening they had both perfected the printer driver and corrected the bug for all printers. The next morning another package arrived from Regent, with the driver and a bug-free REGENT WORD III! That level of quality of support more than meets your

expectations of product excellence. But to continue.

The block feature of Regent Word II is exquisite. Blocks are marked to copy, move or style. This whole operation is very easy and fool proof because it uses GEM. I liked it. An internal block buffer is used to do all the usual things. To move, copy or restyle a block, place the cursor at the beginning of the block and in the EDIT drop down menu, click on Start Block. Move the cursor to the end of the block and in the EDIT drop down menu, click on End Block. A dialog box appears saying COPY, MOVE, STYLE. If you click STYLE the block instantly changes to the style set up in the STYLE menu. If you click on COPY or MOVE, the block disappears and will reappear where you put the cursor and click on PASTE BLOCK under the EDIT menu.

The global and local search and replace functions are as simple and easy to use as the block and style features described above.

An interesting feature is the Type-over mode which types over any letter that is under the cursor. The Insert mode, of course, inserts the typed material into the document and does not change what is already there. Of interest also is the FIND CURSOR command (F10), be sure to try this one. The effect is just short of startling. The mail merge facility is used in conjunction with REGENT BASE, a program to be reviewed subsequently.

The Regent Word II spell checker is not as good as THUNDER!. For regular use we would suggest linking Bi's THUNDER! as an accessory with Regent Word II. This makes a great combination and is a joy to use.

The 45-pages of documentation take the person who has never used a word processor up through the intricacies of printing in various formats and into mail merging and alphabetizing your lists. For the jaded WP operator, it may take half an hour to scan to make sure you have not missed a hidden goodie here or there, e.g. you can set the Font portion of the 1st ruler to produce nine different fonts. But it stops there and doesn't tell you what they are. A glaring hole in otherwise first rate documentation.

The printer driver, of course, is not cited in the previous documentation. But it is as easy to use as Regent Word II itself. On one screen you have Fonts 1-9 listed and lines for turning on and off bold, elite, superscript, subscript and underlining and carriage return. You merely fill in the spaces from your printer's manual of codes for each function and click, you have a new customized printer driver. Likely, the easiest to design that we have encountered. The bonus is that you can not only design nine fonts of your choosing, but you can have separate printer drivers with other fonts.

Regent Software has also tendered a special \$60 discount offer to those of you who received 1ST WORD with

your ST's or purchased it later. If you send your original 1ST WORD disk and \$40 to Regent Software, they will send you their REGENT WORD II disk, priced at \$99.95.

Many of us, dedicated fans of REGENT WORD, have waited for this program patiently for almost half a year. While the first couple of days of poking and testing were a mix of pleasure and "printer pain", what with the bug and lack of a driver, the superb support from the company, contributed greatly to making the wait worthwhile. REGENT WORD II is up front in the keen competition with the other second generation word processors for the ST.

Coming Next Month in

CURRENT NOTES

ROGUE (by John L. Crowell)

ST POOL (by Joe Kuffner)

HARDBALL (by Bryan C. Pieritz)

HABAVIEW (by Pamela Rice Frank)

dBMAN at the Yacht Races
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D E G A S E L I T E**Hudson Strikes Again!***Reviewed by BILL Moes*

With the introduction of the Atari ST over a year ago, users asked for a full-featured graphics program. Then came "DEGAS". But what about three-dimensional graphics, something not requiring the impossible task of entering data in never-ending numerical sets. Something powerful. Yet easy. And we saw "CAD-3D". And now. Let's take better advantage of the memory, speed, and graphics potential of the machine. "DEGAS" is fine, but it has its limits. We need something more.

... watch the dawn. It's no longer a need. It's called "DEGAS Elite". And it's here.

"DEGAS", "CAD-3D", and "DEGAS Elite": Tom Hudson is responsible for them all. Hudson lives in Mission, Kansas, a place somewhere off to the side of Silicon Valley. Kansas? The land of Toto ... and a wizard.

WE'RE NOT THERE ANYMORE

Your initial look at "Elite" will merely hint. If you've used "DEGAS", you'll see the familiar rectangular menu boxes filling the screen. Comfortable. And with a right-button press, the well-known blank white screen awaits. So back to the first screen to search for differences. Notice the GEM menus across the top. And that one on the right, the most entrancing of all, is simply labeled *BLOCK*. But what magic rises with that dropdown!

Blocks are easily defined, either by quickly framing them within a rectangular area or by using up to 25 line segments to surgically surround the pixels. Move or copy the block on the same screen or to any of the other available screens. Or use the block as a brush.

Create an "Elite" graphics block in any size and then manipulate its appearance in ways quiet and minor. Or for a visible perspective shift. Or to a state which will barely hint at recognition.

With *Stretch*, you resize it in to a pixel or out to the full screen. In scale, if you wish. Or just vertically or horizontally or both. Think you've made a mistake? Press < UNDO > and the block is back to its initial form. The < UNDO > is available throughout "Elite", offering a quick out from an in-process mistake or a fast scratch for one already completed.

Rotate the block by degrees, to see text or graphics climb the side of a mountain or turn on its back. The rotational degrees are shown next to the block, making it not at all difficult to set the exact degree you want.

Skew it, with the variable slant choices going horizontal or vertical. This offers the instant look of graphics leaning toward any of the cardinal points.

And -- most dramatically -- *Distort* the shape of your graphics by taking any or all of the four corners of a rectangle outlining the block and moving each of them apart or together or across. Be a quick-change artist and flip the entire block to see a view from the far side. Or pull the lower points apart and move the upper ones together to put a sense of distance into the perspective. Or move the points on the right apart and to the right, setting the graphics to expand into trumpet-shape.

The possibilities with *Distort* burn as long as the imagination is aflame. And when you're ready to see the new view, a click and "Elite" redraws the block to fill the outline's new shape. For larger blocks, this redraw may take a minute or so, but the result can be something like a child watching Christmas: a mixture of wonder and surprise and satisfaction.

The choices offered with *BLOCK* are clearly most exciting. The French artist, Edgar Degas, is well-remembered for the various perspectives and viewpoints seen in his paintings of a 100 years ago. While it would border on the ridiculous to draw any great parallel, it's still something of a sublime challenge to be offered the potential to easily alter the perspective and view of our own graphic work within a program so named.

THE TOOL SHED

The other choices are no disappointment, either. Brushes: 15 redefinable and usable with a solid color or any fill pattern. Outline: three variables help you use any color to outline any object. Fill: 36 single-color patterns are all redefinable. Fill (more): 36 multicolored patterns are all redefinable. Slowdraw: seven speed choices. Snap: create an invisible grid from a choice of eight sizes to help align graphics or text.

Smear: loosen up the edges or joins of the graphics for a less-formal appearance. Airbrush: three speeds and three sizes. Stipple: similar to an airbrush but using the current brush-shape or graphics block over eight area ranges and with three speeds. Change: select a color you've used on the screen as the only color to be "painted over" with additional graphics. Magnify: 10 levels (3X - 12X), changeable and full-screen-movable while in the mode.

There is also the usual assortment of more standard drawing features, many with variations not so standard. Line: use a solid color, block, or fill in one of seven editable line patterns. Mirror: four possibilities. Shadow: use any palette color in one of eight directions and one of 16 distance off-sets. And don't forget about the circle, disk, k-line, eraser, point, ray, frame, box, and polygon.

Once you've figured out the power of each of the tools above, think about combining a couple of them. Many, including fills and lines, window the choices and all have variations and settings to spend a long time exploring.

As with almost any other graphics program, the documentation does suggest experimenting with the possibilities. Unlike almost any other graphics program, you will. For a long time. It's almost like an adventure game: you're thinking about the doors you can open even while they're closed by a keyboard far away.

CYCLE SPINS

Animation through color-cycling is also possible with "Elite". You may set up to four combinations of the palette colors to cycle, each set moving in either direction and each at an independently set speed (very, very slow to quite fast). Set the textured greens of a mountain meadow winding slowly while a volcano hurls colors in a rapid flash.

Using an animation's color combinations, you may also cycle the colors while drawing. This offers an easy method of adding grouped colors to the scene.

Obviously, not all of these graphics tools are available with a monochrome monitor, although the increased detail possible would offer its own reward.

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

Text was one of the main features of "DEGAS" a year ago. "Elite" approaches text a little differently. Up to nine fonts will load as part of the program load. Staying in memory, these will then generally be available in six sizes. All loaded fonts plus the system font are usable in the standard solid form or in any combination of five settings: underlined, thickened, lightened, skewed, and outlined.

A program is to be provided with "Elite" to convert the standard "DEGAS" fonts into ones for "Elite". Also, the fonts you wish loaded will need to be listed in a systems file on the "Elite" disk. The listing may be made with a word processor and presents no difficulty. The documentation clearly explains the process.

In fact, the documentation clearly explains everything and will be an important read to fully understand the software. The features of "Elite" are described and suggestions for their use are offered. There's also the expected index and quick-reference guide. In characteristic fashion, Hudson includes notes to programmers about file formats.

SAVING AND SEEING

Drives "A" through "P" are supported for those of us who are so driven. "Elite" will automatically convert picture files of any resolution into the current resolution. Also, "NEOchrome", 8-bit Koala, and IFF

formats may be automatically converted and displayed. IFF (Interchange File Format) was developed by Electronic Arts for the Amiga. It covers not only graphics files, but text and music as well. Hudson is a strong believer in computer compatibility and looks upon IFF as a potentially important standard for the industry.

Screen files are saved in compressed (around 10 to 24K) form or left in the standard uncompressed "DEGAS" style. Brushes and fills may, of course, also be saved. Blocks are saved as either a block file or as a C programmer's mono-colored icon file. As the block files are saved under IFF, it's possible to define the whole screen as a block and save it in a format which could be transferred to Amiga software supporting IFF.

Up to four work screens are available on a standard 520 ST; up to eight on a 1-Meg machine. This number may be lower with a large number of fonts loaded or with larger desk accessories. Full screens, as well as the blocks, are quickly moved from one work screen to another.

Choosing colors for "Elite" graphics is about as simple as it's likely to get on the ST: when going to the color selection menu, pick from a screen showing all 512 colors. It's also no trouble to set a range of colors by defining two end-point colors and clicking for a set of intermediate hues, helping add subtlety to your display.

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Nearly all choices in "Elite" are made with the mouse, although most also have a keyboard alternative you'll quickly find quite helpful. By pressing a key, it's generally possible to change tools (geometric forms, brushes, colors, ...) without ever leaving a drawing screen.

Because a GDOS (Graphics Device Operating System) program is in an < AUTO > folder, it's necessary to do a reboot or system reset when starting "Elite". Excellent articles on the importance of GDOS have appeared in CURRENT NOTES (October) and START (Summer).

Batteries included did not copy-protect the \$79.95 "Elite", continuing its policy of respect for the user. Also, if you own "DEGAS" you may send your original disk and \$40 to BI for a copy of "Elite".

BETA BOOP

The Beta version of "Elite" I used did not include the font converter, a font-maker, or the slide-show display program. All of these were to be included in the disk's final form. There may also have been other changes or additions made to "Elite" since Beta-3.

The only problem I noticed was in leaving the color selection window. Occasionally, parts of that menu were left on the screen and it was necessary to re-enter color selection and then exit again. This happened quite seldom and never seemed more than a minor annoyance.

With the converter program not available, I tried the desk-accessory font loader from Antic's "Maps & Legends" to change style. While this provided a wide variety of fonts through a quick disk load, it altered only four of the six available text sizes. Also, not all sizes and settings were as clear as I might have wished. And you miss out on the proportional spacing the converted fonts provide. Lesson: use the converter.

"Elite" seems to be lacking little, but there are several adjustments which might be helpful. We could see Change affect more than one color at a time. Or graphics tools in addition to freehand drawing could be available in Magnify. Or various density adjustments could be possible in the Shadow. Who knows.

But these are very minor items at the moment. For the sophistication of "Elite" is great, adaptive to your task and enhancing your capability.

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Pascal and Modula-2 source code are nearly identical. Modula-2 should be thought of as an enhanced superset of Pascal. Professor Niklaus Wirth (the creator of Pascal) designed Modula-2 to replace Pascal.

Added features of Modula-2 not found in Pascal

- CASE has an ELSE and may contain subranges
- Programs may be broken up into Modules for separate compilation
- Machine level interface Bit-wise operators Direct port and Memory access Absolute addressing Interrupt structure
- Dynamic strings that may be any size
- Multi-tasking is supported
- Procedure variables
- Module version control
- Programmer definable scope of objects
- Open array parameters (VAR r: ARRAY OF REALS.)
- Elegant type transfer functions

Ramdisk Benchmarks (secs)	Compile	Link	Execute	Optimized Size
Sieve of Eratosthenes:	6.2	4.3	3.5	2600 bytes
Float	6.4	4.8	8.3	4844 bytes
Calc	5.5	4.2	3.3	2878 bytes
Null program	5.1	3.2	—	2370 bytes

<pre> MODULE Sieve; CONST Size = 8190; TYPE FlagRange = [0..Size]; FlagSet = SET OF FlagRange; VAR Flags: FlagSet; i: FlagRange; Prime, k, Count, Iter: CARDINAL; BEGIN ('\$S-\$R-\$A-'') FOR Iter := 1 TO 10 DO Count := 0; Flags := FlagSet(); (* empty set *) FOR i := 0 TO Size DO IF (i IN Flags) THEN Prime := (i * 2) + 3, k := i + Prime; WHILE k <= Size DO INCL(Flags, k); k := k + Prime; END; Count := Count + 1; END; END; END Sieve. </pre>	<pre> MODULE Float. FROM MathLib0 IMPORT sin, ln, exp, sqrt, arctan; VAR x, y: REAL; i: CARDINAL; BEGIN ('\$T-\$A-\$S-'') x := 1.0; FOR i := 1 TO 1000 DO y := sin(x); y := ln(x); y := exp(x); y := sqrt(x); y := arctan(x); x := x + 0.01; END. END float. MODULE calc; VAR a,b,c: REAL; n, i: CARDINAL; BEGIN ('\$T-\$A-\$S-'') n = 5000; a = 2.71828; b = 3.14159; c = 1.0; FOR i := 1 TO n DO c := c*a; c := c*b; c := c/a; c := c/b; END; END calc. </pre>
--	---

Product History
The TDI Modula-2 compiler has been running on the Pinnacle supermicro (Aug. '84), Amiga (Jan. '86) and will soon appear on the Macintosh and UNIX in the 4th Qtr. '86.

Regular Version \$79.95 Developer's Version \$149.95 Commercial Version \$299.95
The regular version contains all the features listed above. The developer's version supplies an extra diskette containing a symbol file decoder - link and load file disassemblers - a source file cross referencer - symbolic debugger - high level Windows library Module - Ramdisk and Print Spooler source files - Resource Compiler. The commercial version contains all of the Atari module source files.

Other Modula-2 Products		
Kermit	- Contains full source plus \$15 connect time to Compuserve.	\$29.95
Examples	- Many Modula-2 example programs to show advanced programming techniques	\$24.95
GRID	- Sophisticated multi-key file access method with over 30 procedures to access variable length records.	\$49.95

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TIME LINK

Reviewed by Donald C. Lyles

TimeLink by Batteries Included is a time management program that can easily be used by individuals, families and small businesses. The program is literally an electronic date book in a temporal data base form. Not only is TimeLink a valid medium for keeping a running record of future appointments but also for keeping track of past appointments, with options that allow users to track time devoted to individual appointments or projects. TimeLink's number crunching capabilities also make it an excellent tool for keeping records that require summation either on an individual basis or a collective basis. With travel expense records, for example, meals can be totaled or entire expenses such as hotels, transportation costs, etc. can be computed.

The GEM interface is used to display information either by the day, week, month or year, thereby giving an overall picture of your schedule. Information can be set up so that TimeLink can be used by multiple users such as in an entire office or family and appointments or events common to two or more persons can be extracted and printed out.

After loading the program, you are shown a standard applications screen. The FILE MENU offers the options of creating a new file or opening an existing file. Three sample files are provided. One of the examples is that of a runner's schedule and contains elapsed time of the run and information pertaining to the run itself i.e. weather, physical conditions, etc.

On opening a new file, you are presented with a choice of selecting display by either day, week, month or year. Individual entries are made under the categories of time, date, key and text. Text entries are allowed a generous 512 characters of space. The text box can work like a word processing program in that a search can be made for any specific string (entry) and it can be manipulated like a data base file in that it can total numeric entries. (These two features are specific only to the ST). I found that in searching for a specific string, only forward searches are allowed. So one must fix a date sometime prior to the one being sought in order for it to be found. An easy way to remember this would be for all searches to begin on or after January 1 of the year concerned.

Use of the key field is optional. It can be used for categorizing entries such as those pertaining to one individual by using their initials or can be used to denote commonality such as work for a specific client or project. An additional entry available only to the ST is that of duration of the appointment. If conflicts should arise in your scheduling, the program will warn you of an overlap which you must either change or conscientiously ignore before being able to go on.

Utilizing the time clock from the control panel TimeLink will always display the current time when clicking on the day window. (One must always set the

clock using the control panel unless your machine is equipped with an external clock.)

While in the day window you are given the option of clicking to the previous day or the next day; while in the week window the options of clicking on the previous week or the next week are represented, and so on for the month and year.

Once you have completed your entries, you may print out a hardcopy of your schedule. This can be accomplished by using the tried and true screen dump (alternate + help) or by clicking on the print option from the file menu. The program is set up with printer files for the Epson and Epson compatibles. Documentation provided with TimeLink is both clear and easy to follow with ample illustrations provided. TimeLink is furnished on an unprotected disk making it easier to make a back-up copy and for transfer to hard disk.

TimeLink is available from Batteries Included at a price of \$49.95. Customer support is provided by BI either by phone (five minute limit with any overage charged a small fee) or by correspondence.

I would estimate that TimeLink would be particularly useful to persons whose work is time/appointment oriented such as lawyers, doctors, etc. TimeLink should provide adequate documentation for those who are self-employed and need to keep records for such sticklers of time as the IRS.

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O M N I T R E N D ' S U N I V E R S E I I

-- In a Class by Itself --

Reviewed by *Milt Creighton*

General. UNIVERSE II for the ST simply defies a standard pigeonhole. It is both a text adventure and a graphics-oriented strategy game. At the same time it is a tactical science fiction space combat simulation and a series of undercover espionage missions in the far future. It takes place during a time of interstellar tension between two empires, one a democratically oriented federation and the other a totalitarian dictatorship. It's not hard to guess which side you work for.

UNIVERSE II (\$69.95) is the second in a related series from Omnitrend. It was ported over from the 8-bit machines and has been available for some time for the 8-bit Atari, Apple computers, and the IBM PC. It comes with a well written 105-page manual which sets up the game very nicely and three, count'em, three single-sided game disks. Right away you know this one is special.

The version for the ST makes use of GEM drop-down menus and, except for the text adventure portion, can be played with the mouse. The graphics are done very nicely and there is a wealth of information on the screen you won't fully appreciate until you've played the game for a while. The pseudo-history which sets up the game scenario is one of the best I've ever seen and it's reinforced nicely during game play. It succeeds in getting you involved and you begin to care about which side wins. The mix of text adventure and strategy game is very well done initially but the hundredth time you wait while the game loads and writes the screen describing the arcade at Arbest, you wish mightily for an option with an abbreviated description.

A Problem. That's the one real complaint I have about this game. It's slow, and I do mean slow. The flip side to playing a game with this much depth is, of course, the disadvantage that it won't all fit into memory at once -- or even on two disks for that matter. The computer uses the three disks as virtual memory and as you work your way through the maze of menus, you have to wait while each subroutine is loaded into memory and then executed. And then there's the disk swapping as well, all adding up to what seems like interminable delays. In addition to normal game play, there is an inevitable and immediate penalty for inattention. If you make a mistake in selection of a menu item, you'll want to scream because it'll take you up to a minute to get back to the place where you made the mistake. The game runs at the speed of a floppy disk drive and if you've only got one drive, that's slow in spades. There are solutions, however.

Solutions. Having two drives helps a bit. In fact,

I wouldn't recommend this game to anyone who had only one drive unless he or she's learned patience at the feet of a master (or have a 1040ST or a memory-enhanced 520ST). If you have two drives, you place disk A in drive A and then swap disks B & C out of drive B. Having double-sided drives helps not a whit with early versions of the game. Version 1.0 of the game bombs if you copy disks B & C (which are unprotected) onto one double-sided disk. [Subsequent to this review, Omnitrend has modified the game somewhat. Version 1.3 of UNIVERSE II now comes with three single-sided disks as before, but now you may copy disks B and C onto one double-sided disk which may be placed into your double-sided drive B, eliminating endless disk swaps if you have two drives.]

There are other things you can do too. If you've got a 1040ST or a memory-enhanced 520ST and either one or two drives, use a boot disk to install a 400K RAM disk (Mike4.ACC is available in the public domain and works just fine in this application). Copy disk A to the RAM disk (you still have to put disk A in drive A when you boot the game from the RAM disk -- that's part of the copy protection) and then play the game normally, booting the game from the RAM disk. Now, whenever the game accesses disk A to load a subroutine, it will be done at the speed of dynamic RAM and not at the speed of your floppy disk drive. You still have to swap disk B & C (if you don't have version 1.3) out of drive B (or drive A if you've only got one drive) but the increase in overall game speed is significant. In addition, it may be possible to double the disk access rate of your floppy drives (and thus cut the load time of disks B & C) by formatting copies of those disks using FORMAT + by Brian Duggan which is listed in the September issue of Analog magazine. Remember, don't forget to save your game positions back to drive A before you quit or you will lose what was stored on the RAM disk.

Another tip, if you've got ALT from MichTron or one of the other commercially available macro desk accessories such as ST KEY from Shanner, use that to shorthand the expressions commonly found in the text adventure (you'll learn which ones soon enough) and you'll save some more time and frustration. Personally, I get tired of typing "activate terminal" for the hundredth time. Finally, if you're one of the lucky ones who has a hard disk, this game's for you. Copy the whole game onto the hard disk and place disk A in floppy drive A (to satisfy the copy protection) and get started -- no waiting at all between menu items. It makes the game a dream to play.

The Game. As for the game itself, it's a real grabber. Your character is a "retired" officer in the

Federated Worlds Special Forces (FWSF) and you are currently engaged in trying to make a living as a space-faring merchant trader, buying low at planet A and selling high at planet B. What makes it tricky is that sometimes you wind up doing the reverse. In any case, you haven't really retired and are currently acting as an undercover operative for the intelligence gathering arm of the FWSF. You'll get jobs to do from time to time but, in the meantime, you have to actually earn a living. Your crew is initially made up of low-rating (read inexpert), but loyal and inexpensive types. You'll want to change that pretty quick. Your ship is the smallest trader available and carries the cheapest on-board systems in the Local Cluster. Fortunately, you have lots of fuel and you're gonna need it.

You can make money by trading, by carrying passengers in suspended animation (people-sickies, as it were), mining (once you've bought the mining equipment and hired people to operate it), and/or piracy (don't try this one until you've bought weapons and hired a gunner or the results are going to be embarrassing). Of course for you purists, piracy becomes privateering if you're in enemy territory. None of these things will make you a lot of money by themselves unless you're very cagey and very patient -- or you learn how to cheat. So most of us will struggle along, buying fuel and provisions, paying our crew, and upgrading our ships whenever we can.

Starting Off. In the very beginning of the game you find yourself in the Hope star system and have to motor in to Axia using your sublight drives to begin game play. Once at Axia you have your choice of going to drydock (in orbit around the planet) or going into low-Axia orbit and using your shuttle to land at the starport. I'd recommend doing the former first. You will need to pay the members of your crew but you don't have to do it just yet -- so stiff them the first time out and then go to the labor mart to see if there are any good astrogators about. If you can get one level 14 or better hire him and then assimilate him so he can stand full watches. Once you've done that release all three of the others. Also look for a good pilot here; the ones you've got will be dangerous where we're going.

Now you might be tempted to go to the parts menu and begin to upgrade your ship's systems. True, you need a better converter and a better hyperdrive right away. You can buy them here but you'll have to settle for a relatively low-level system. It might be better to wait and buy better at Vromus Prime or Arbest. You'll also need a bigger shuttle so you won't have to make multiple trips to pick up and deliver passengers, but again the sophistication level here will limit what's available and, as with the hyperdrive and converter, what you'll buy here will only be an interim solution.

Don't buy weapons yet; they're a needless waste of money at this point and the ones you can get here will only succeed in getting you into trouble. You don't really have enough money to set yourself up as a minor

yet either. If you decide to buy systems, don't leave yourself short in credits. Keep about 200,000 credits to buy goods on Axia for sale on Zeath.

Once you've explored the drydock sufficiently, depart and go into low orbit around Axia. Now's the time to check the vidcom for messages and look at crew members. Did you notice that anyone you've hired in drydock just went up a level? Get in your shuttle(s) and get down to the starport. Once you've managed to get through your first encounter (did you have the courage to kiss Desmona Ret?) go to the transaction room, enter one of the booths, and activate the terminal. Load passengers for Zeath and then go to the products section and buy goods. Be patient and buy at a good price -- the more expensive items will bag you a better profit.

Next go to Zeath under hyperdrive and sell the goods you bought and off-load the passengers. Pick up passengers for Vromus Prime -- but no goods -- and head there. Once at Vromus Prime, go to drydock and buy the biggest shuttle, then use it to take all the passengers at once down to the planet. Deliver the passengers, buy goods, and pick up passengers for Axia. Now you begin one of the Great Wheel Routes (Axia to Arbest to Vromus Prime to Axia). Go to Axia, selling goods and delivering passengers. Pick up passengers for Arbest (but no goods) and go there. Arbest has the highest sophistication of any of the worlds in the Local Cluster and it is here you should buy the biggest hibernaculum, the best autodoc, the best ore converter, shuttle, etc. Buy goods here and take them to Vromus Prime and continue as before.

As early as you can you should be hiring mid-level types and putting them into school. An astrogator, an engineer, a gunner, lots of marines, possibly miners, and, finally, two or three pilots. Once you've got a level 20 astrogator and gunner, assimilate them -- it's cheaper.

A few hints. Upgrade to a larger hulled ship fairly soon, you'll need the room... In combat with a ship which carries a cargo you're interested in, fire a salvo or two of Pritchard SBR's followed by a salvo of Woden FE's to kill the crew. That way you don't take a chance of destroying your prey. Don't use the EBW unless you want to destroy the other ship. By the way, warships around Arbest appear to turn a blind eye to piracy (excuse me, privateering) right under their noses... Be careful about positioning your marines -- the better ones move farther in a turn and you'll clog up the passageways with the slow of foot. If you don't pay attention and, believe me, it hurts to see one of your level 20's go down because he was exposed without adequate support... Another thing, the Ramscoops aren't a good deal. I've talked with one of the game designers about it and they aren't supposed to be a good deal. Further, I think there's a bug in the subroutine and the program doesn't credit you with the ore you've collected once you leave -- a double whammy considering the damage you've taken... Make sure you're in low orbit before loading the shuttles

or you're gonna want to cry when you see what's happened to all those paying passengers you were banking on -- and a waste of energy to boot!

A wish list. As with any game you've played and enjoyed, there are always wish lists, things you wish the game designers had included. In UNIVERSE II I found myself wishing for more save game positions -- four really isn't enough. It would also be nice if the program would allow disks B & C to be copied on one double-sided disk. They aren't copy protected after all and it would save a lot of disk swapping for folks who have double-sided drives. I wish it was possible to capture an "enemy" ship as well as its cargo, ore, and credits. Putting a prize crew aboard, you could sell the ship (at a fraction of its value, of course) at one of the FW drydocks and add more realism into the bargain -- lots of room to expand here such as attempts to retake the ship, reaction of enemy warships, what to do with a ship you've just liberated only to find it had a FW port of registry, etc. Finally, I'd like to see a way to modify the basic ship designs -- such as allowing two hibernaculums if you've got the space, or two missile racks and launchers at the expense of something else.

The Bottom Line. UNIVERSE II is the finest space game I have ever played on a computer. It rivals the complexity of advanced boardgames but is much easier to play because the computer does all the bookkeeping. It stands head and shoulders above the other 8-bit space games and will be a viable game on the 16-bit machines for some time to come. It is slow but there are things that can be done about that and the pride of the developer is evident in the quality of the workmanship. Who else do you know who offers a dedicated bulletin board to provide assistance to players? Whether you like strategy games or text adventures or even if you don't and there's just a little romance in your soul, this one's a must.

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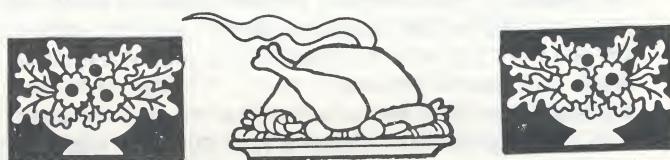
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P R O S P E R O ' S P R O F O R T R A N**- At Last, A Real Language -***Reviewed by John Barnes*

I once promised myself that I would not replace my Atari 800 until I could get a computer with FORTRAN. The ST was hard to resist and became irresistible once I learned that there was at least one FORTRAN compiler for the machine. This article gives my impressions of the ProFortran package produced by Prospero software. Some other time I hope to use this space to tell why I love FORTRAN as a language.

ProFortran, from Prospero Software is a product that claims to implement the entire FORTRAN-77 language as defined in ANSI Standard X3.9-1978. The compiler generates native code (i.e. machine-language rather than pseudo-code). There is however, no conversational mode, and all programs must be compiled and linked before they can be run.

DOCUMENTATION. I regard ProFortran's documentation as good. The loose-leaf manual runs to around 200 pages in a sturdy binder. The sections are well organized and the instructions are clear. Some users may miss the usual patronizing "gee whiz" tutorial. I like to look in the index, find a clear, concise explanation, and try it. This manual is a reference manual. The explanations are precise, but terse. It is definitely NOT a textbook. If you already know FORTRAN you will be happy, as I was. If not, go to B. Dalton or Crown books and get yourself a book on FORTRAN, you will need it.

If you are going to use the GEM hooks you will need additional documentation. The information provided by Prospero is nothing more than a list of calling sequences. No description, no nothing. I found a lot of useful-looking (but obtuse) information in the GEM Programmers' Reference from Abacus books. I have not yet had the courage to plunge into this. ST Applications magazine has a simple plotting application that looks pretty good and I hope to port something similar over from a super-mini soon.

OPERATION. ProFortran comes on a single 360K disc. The disc is essentially filled up with a two-pass compiler, a linker, a program to install a "resident library", a library of modules to access GEM DOS in the ST, a librarian utility to allow the user to maintain his own collections of useful code modules, several miscellaneous object modules, a couple of programs for modifying configuration features, and several examples.

Nothing is protected and the user must build an operating disk (or directory on a hard disk) that suits his needs. The user also has the opportunity to customize the compiler by changing the default settings of certain "switches".

There is no program editor. Any editor that produces a plain vanilla ASCII text file will do. I use 1st-Word in the non-WP mode and Micro-Emacs depending on my mood. Since code development involves a number of cycles of editing, compiling, linking, and, finally (at long last), running, I often operate from Michtron's DOS Shell rather than the GEM desktop. I can then use .BAT files to save opening and closing windows and finding programs to click on. The .BAT files also serve to document the process of building programs up from complex assemblages of source modules.

1ST WORD, which is very nice for large-scale editing, is not comfortable in the DOS Shell environment and I usually use MicroEmacs on the final passes.

I have never tried to compile to and from floppy disk, but I imagine it would be very tedious. For this reason I believe that this product will not appeal to users who have memory-starved ST's. I use a ramdisk on my ST to hold the various components of the FORTRAN package, and this does speed up editing, compiling, and linking. As soon as I can find a hard disk at a sensible price I will try that.

In order to build a FORTRAN application program you must edit the source code, run the compiler to generate an object module in machine language, and link this module to some other boilerplate that the system requires in order to fire up the program up and hook into the ST's innards. The latter function is performed by a run-time library that must be installed before trying to run either the compiler or the application program.

If you get the impression that this is not terribly convenient, you are right. Users who lust after GEM applications will find a library of functions and subroutines that can be linked to if needed.

ProFortran includes a "library" facility that can be very handy in maintaining collections of modules (functions and/or subroutines) that are parts of a bigger package or that are generally useful. When linking to a library only those modules that are actually needed are extracted. Modules built in Pro Pascal can also be linked into a final program and instructions are given for interfacing to modules written in assembly language.

"Optimizing" compilers are supposed to be smart enough to minimize the number of steps needed to perform the program's work. I cannot say whether ProFortran does any optimizing. I suspect that the code that it generates is "threaded" rather than "inline".

Compilation times do not seem to be unduly long (10

or 15 seconds using ramdisk). When the compiler has finished its work it gives the user a chance to view the screen before he must give a keystroke to continue. I wish this feature could be customized away or switched off because it interferes with batch operations.

FUNCTIONALITY. Given that FORTRAN on the ST is somewhat awkward to use the first reason for using it is to run a particular application for which source code has been obtained from elsewhere. So far every code that I have ported over in this way has worked. Minor editing changes have been needed because the original codes used extensions to the ANSI standard that ProFortran does not support. The compiler appears to generate correct code, which is the first criterion for functionality.

My past experience in Atari software tells me that the other shoe will drop one of these days, so I will not give an unqualified endorsement of this product's ability to do its job.

The use that the compiler makes of ST resources appears good, and there are several nice little features like the one that allows a running program to invoke a "daughter" program or to parse a command string.

I would like an option to create standalone programs so that I can distribute them to friends who do not want or need the FORTRAN-77 language. The resident library notion prevents this although it does mean that not every piece of code has to have all of the boilerplate.

SPEED. The second reason for using a compiler is speed. Code that does not need to be interpreted should run faster. Steve Eitelman's experience with various BASIC compilers shows that this is not always so, and I have compiled and run some of his benchmarks. The FORTRAN source codes for these will be available on a future AURA disk, but people who need them can contact me in the meantime. The only thing I could compare with was ST BASIC, but I found speed increases in all categories as the following table shows:

Table 1 - Execution Times in Seconds

Benchmark	ST BASIC	ProFortran
SIEVE	247.1	1.2
COSTEST	74.3	42.2
MANDZM	131.8	14.8
STRINGS (CREATE)	67.2	3.2
(SORT)	257	3.8
(LIST)	172	38.1

If anyone is seriously interested, they can drop me a line to obtain the sources for the above codes. The SIEVE, COSTEST, and STRINGS codes are from Steve Eitelman. MANDZM is from Scientific American, August '85. ProFortran is obviously FAST, approaching speeds I would expect from a VAX. The speed gain for number crunching is not, however, as great as I would hope for.

Benchmarks are often misleading because some benchmarks are well enough known that compilers can be set to recognize them and get really smart. FORTRAN is most renowned for applications that use a lot of floating point and a factor of 3 or 4 here would make the difference between doing a calculation and forgetting about it. It is clear that ProFortran deserves serious consideration on the basis of speed.

GEM DEMO. Just for grins I tried the GEM demo supplied by Prospero. It very quickly popped up a nice little window with a simple x-y plot in it. The source code cautions that a full-blown GEM application could run to a thousand or more lines of code. I am not ready for this yet, but I encourage anyone else to try.

CONCLUSION. Given that FORTRAN is an outstanding language for solving all kinds of problems (as distinguished from a language that teaches about computers), ProFortran should be able to hold its own against the various C's, Pascals, Modulas, etc. Pricing is under \$100, which is certainly competitive. The implementation provided here is complete enough that I am at a loss to make up a "wish list". ProFortran -- Try it, you might like it.



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ATARI ST ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

HOW TO USE THE 520 ST

Video Documentation, Bright and Clear

Reviewed by Frank Sommers

ST-philes are not used to seeing their documentation come in a VHS or BETA video cassette box. Nor are they accustomed to viewing their ST screen from 6 to 8 feet away, with GEM menus draped on a 25" TV screen, as a professionally sounding voice in warm friendly tones instructs on the care and feeding of that machine you've just brought through the door.

This piece of video documentation is something quite new for the ST. It is not magic nor mystifying, but merely creative and talented use of a medium to generate the best documentation for familiarizing yourself with your computer that this writer has witnessed. From unpacking the boxes and identifying and assembling the components to mastering a word processor and drawing program, the video takes you gently by the hand and explains all those things that we railed about when we found them missing from our ST Get-Acquainted-Pamphlet.

You appreciate the thought and detail that has gone into the clear concise thoroughly informative presentation. What generates real admiration is the way they have animated your ST monitor screen, and coupled it to voice and music to forge an instrument of instruction and guidance that is what the art of instruction is all about.

MIDI & MUSIC AT THE ATARIFEST!

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The 'MUSIC/MIDI' Room

The Woowhzeri comes when in reviewing the NeoChrome software accompanying the ST, they advise on the potential of slide show programs by present the best of the early picture series that we all cut our teeth on while waiting for software. But what a slide show! On a large TV screen, the pictures are almost startling in their effect. The price of the video (\$29.95) is worth the slide show by itself.

The video starts well with the moving picture of the bird flapping over the flowing glittering water. It then takes you through a thorough and easily comprehensible review on the use of each of the GEM menus and the individual items in them. With that your off and computing, using NeoChrome to draw and generate slide shows, and then a detailed tutorial on the use of 1ST WORD, the word processor bundled with the ST.

The tape is a first in documentation for the ST, as we note. For those of you who had trouble getting into 1ST WORD, the soothing balm awaits you with Johathan Merrill's well-done first offering for the ST. Let us hope who follows quickly with other video documentation of major ST programs. He has been well tutored in the Chinese art of making a picture worth a 1000 words.

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E P Y X 5 0 0 X J J O Y S T I C K*Reviewed by Lou Praino*

How many joysticks have you and your family been through since you bought your first computer? If your family is like mine, four to eight would not be an excessive number. The main problems encountered with most of the original and replacement Atari compatible joysticks seem to fall into two main categories. The sensitivity of the unit, and the durability or quality of construction. Finally, Konix Mfg. Co. seems to have solved both problems with their newly released joystick -- the EPYX 500XJ.

The first thing that you will notice upon handling the new "XJ" is the unconventional shape of its body, which, when it is grasped in your left hand, will automatically assume its correct playing position, smoothly and naturally. The unit, as it sits in your palm, places the firing button at the lower right hand side, where your forefinger, (or middle finger if you wish), is positioned directly over it, ready to go to work. The feeling you get with the unit in your hand, is one of a natural, non-fatiguing grip, which translates into comfort.

Instinctively, after grabbing hold of the unit, you will start moving the joystick control lever back and forth with your right hand, and, this is when you will notice the second innovation in the EPYX 500XJ. Instead of the usual smooth push and stop, you will hear and feel a definite "click" in each of the eight stick operating positions. It sounds, and feels, as if there are individual micro-switches at each of these positions. Inasmuch as I have not disassembled one of these units, I cannot vouch for this, but at any rate, it sure does have that type of feeling.

I tried the unit on a number of different games, and just to make sure that my results were not unique, also had my son and a neighbor give it a whirl, also using the same games. It was during these tests that a interesting quirk or flaw, depending on your view point, became evident -- a quirk which greatly affected the test results. It seems that the unit performs excellently in the four basic positions at 12, 3, 6 and 9 o'clock, but is sadly lacking in sensitivity in the diagonal positions at 1:30, 4:30, 7:30, and 10:30. The positions themselves, for some reason, are extremely hard to find, and when you do, the response is slow and somewhat erratic.

Just to make certain that this was not a problem associated just with this individual joystick, another EPYX 500XJ was procured from a different source, and the testing continued with both joysticks. The first thing noticed was that the diagonal sensitivity of the second unit was just as poor as the first unit, but the main positions remained as sharp and sensitive as the first unit. I must assume, therefore, that the problem stems from a basic flaw in the unit's design.

These joysticks were first tested on a group of games which require the use of all eight stick positions

to function. These included World Karate Championship, Ninja, Kung Foo, Chop Suey, Zorro, and Flight Simulator II. In this group of games the use of the EPYX 500XJ, when compared with conventional type joysticks, caused either a loss of approximately 500 to 3,000 points, or, at best, a hard fought tie. In the case of Flight Simulator II, its performance could be described merely adequate, at best.

The second group of games that the 500XJ was tested on included Hard Hat Mac, Pac Man, Bombers, Sea Dragon, Popeye, Defender, Eastern Front 1941, and Landscape. On this group of games the joystick then seemed to come into its own. The point spread increased dramatically over conventional joysticks, varying from a low end increase of 310 points to a high of over 5000 points. All the movements in the basic four positions were fast, smooth and positive.

In summary, while I cannot recommend the EPYX 500XJ joystick as a full-time replacement for your conventional joystick, it does have its place among your collection of computer-wares. In those software applications where only your basic four positional moves are required, the 500XJ will easily out-shine most others. This, combined with the added benefit that hand fatigue during long sessions is virtually eliminated, makes this twelve dollar range joystick not a bad bargain at all.

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LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS

- Interactive Fiction Comes of Age -

Reviewed by David Duberman

We all know that Atari computers can be used to produce outstanding graphics and sound effects. And as long as Atari continues marketing technologically advanced machines and selling them for peanuts, I'll keep buying their computers. But as long as Atari computers are capable of displaying text, I'll be using them to play Infocom's Inimitable text-only adventures. The Massachusetts-based organization has proven time and time again that you can create better graphics in the mind of the user than you could ever display on the screen. Besides, using only text makes it a heckuva lot easier to convert the adventures to every machine in existence. But seriously, folks, it's hard to imagine how a game like LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS could be graphically presented on any computer -- the imagery is just so wild that using verbal descriptions is much more appropriate than displaying a picture. But with the aid of a little imagination, You Are There!! -- from Mars to Venus and back again, with a few side trips along the way.

In the unlikely circumstance that you're unfamiliar with text adventures, a brief introduction is in order. These text-only computer games got started in the early days of computing, when text was just about all most computers could display, and they've endured remarkably well. To play an adventure, you type instructions into the computer in response to a description of your current situation in an imaginary scenario, whereupon you're presented with a new scenario which depends on the results of your prior action. A typical situation might be 'You see a path leading north.', at which you might type 'Go North'. Text adventures are also called 'interactive fiction' and 'electronic novels' with good reason; while they don't actually give you 'free will' to go anywhere and do anything, the best-designed programs often present that illusion.

LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS is presented as a parody of the pulp adventure genre of fiction popular among the masses during the 1930's and 40's. The game begins in 1936 in your favorite sleazy bar in Sandusky, Ohio, where you determine your character's gender for the rest of the game by choosing which restroom in which to relieve yourself. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to you, the Leather Goddesses have been preparing to invade Earth to turn it into their private pleasure garden and enslave every man and woman in the process. And they want you as an experimental subject. You're shortly whisked away to begin the real adventure, accompanied by a loyal companion who provides you with the scheme by which you can defeat the Leather Goddesses. You visit a widely varying series of locales attempting to solve various intertwining puzzles, which run the gamut from word games to mechanical teasers. As usual, the key to finishing the game is figuring out which items must be used with certain other items, and solving the various puzzles in the correct order. Most of the game is standard clever Infocom text

adventure fare, expertly constructed by veteran puzzler Steve Meretzky.

The game really isn't quite as wild as you might expect given the heavy hype Infocom's ads have been giving the three playing modes; Tame for the faint of heart, Suggestive for the slightly bolder, and Lewd for the dirty old man in all of us. The Lewd mode really isn't all that naughty, not that it makes much of a difference -- sex is a relatively minor part of the storyline. But it's nice to know that Infocom has finally realized that adults who play their games appreciate being treated as such. Other marketing gimmicks include a seven-scent Scratch 'N' Sniff card (you're instructed where to sniff at appropriate points in the game) and a well-done 3D comic book -- The Adventures of Lane Mastodon.

LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS is fun, amusing, and challenging. It's not the best or toughest Infocom game ever, but it's enjoyable nonetheless. If you've never played a text adventure before, you could do worse than to start here (or try Infocom's SEASTALKER or WISHBRINGER). And even experienced adventurers should find at least eight hours of challenging fun.

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NEW DISKS THIS MONTH

- #78: DIGI SOUND DEMO NO. 1 *. OXYGEN - Disco Version (By Hypnosis) You will be amazed at the quality of the digitized sounds coming from your ST speaker with this and the next disk.
- #79: DIGI SOUND DEMO NO. 2 *. FOREIGN AFFAIR - (by Mike Oldfield)
- #80: MONOCHROME GAMES DISK NO. 2. MONOPOLY - a pool game with 6 balls; KRABAI - a chess game for beginning to intermediate players.
- #81: UTILITY DISK #6. Version 3 of WORD400; an address book program; change DESKTOP drive icons to diskettes; Gem shell for ARC.ARC; nice directory lister; quick I/O formatter and more...
- #82: SAMPLE C PROGRAMS NO. 3. Another disk of compiled C programs and the associated source files.
- #83: SAMPLE MODULA-2 PROGRAMS NO. 1. The patches and corrections to version 2 of IDI's MODULA-2 as well as a collection of MODULA-2 source files.
- #84: ST TERM 2.1 DEMO DISK. A demo of ST-Term 2.1 telecommunications program.
- #85: SOUND AND GRAPHICS DEMOS NO. 3. Sample screens from OO TOPUS; music player with four music files and more...

* Requires 1040 ST (or one meg 520 ST).

ANALOG DISKS: (No. 1 - April '86) through (No. 8 - November '86).

DISKS LISTED BY CATEGORY
Applications

- #15: ST WRITER Version 1.50
- #29: MicroEMACS Text Editor
- #59: VIP TEMPLATES

Commercial Demos

- #3: 4XFORTH DEMO DISK
- #27: DBMAN DEMO DISK
- #28: DBMAN TUTORIAL and MAILING LIST
- #34: MUSIC ON YOUR ST (XLENT ST MUSIC BOX)
- #39: ARCADE DEMOS
- #44: ZOOMRACKS DEMO DISK
- #55: LEWIS 123 DEMO & ENCRYPT
- #56: EASY DRAW DEMO DISK
- #57: ST ONE WRITE DEMO DISK
- #58: VIP PROFESSIONAL DEMO DISK
- #69: GRAPHICS ARTIST DEMO Part I *
- #70: GRAPHICS ARTIST DEMO Part II *
- #74: ST SAMPLER NO. 1
- #76: PRINT TECHNIK SOUND DIGITIZER DEMO
- #84: ST-TERM 2.1 DEMO DISK <----- NEW

Game Disks

- #21: ST GAME DISK No. 1
- #37: ST GAME DISK No. 2
- #39: ARCADE DEMOS

#54: MONOCHROME PUZZLE (mono)

#62: HACK

#80: MONOCHROME GAMES DISK NO. 2 <----- NEW

Graphics and Drawing

- #7: GRAPHICS DEMO PROGRAMS NO. 1
- #14: NEOCHROME
- #32: SOUND AND GRAPHICS DEMOS NO. 2
- #35: ATARI ST DEMO DISK
- #64: DOLL ANIMATION DEMO *
- #66: GLOBE DEMO DISK *
- #67: BALL/BIRD DEMO DISK
- #68: CAD 3D PICTURES
- #77: CAD 3D ANIMATION DEMO
- #85: SOUND AND GRAPHICS DEMOS NO. 3 <----- NEW

Language Disks

- #8: SAMPLE C PROGRAMS
- #9: SAMPLE LOGO PROGRAMS
- #12: DOODLE WITH C SOURCE CODE
- #19: XLISP
- #22: SAMPLE BASIC PROGRAMS
- #31: PASCAL & MODULA 2
- #33: SAMPLE C PROGRAMS NO. 2
- #46: GEM QUESTION & ANSWER BULLETIN
- #49: SAMPLE PASCAL PROGRAMS NO. 1
- #53: ATARI ST FORTH-83 MODEL
- #71: FORTHMACS WORKING DISK Ver. 1.1
- #82: SAMPLE C PROGRAMS NO. 3 <----- NEW
- #83: SAMPLE MODULA-2 PROGRAMS NO. 1 <----- NEW

Miscellaneous

- #23: INSOFT MAGAZINE - JAN '86
- #38: INSOFT MAGAZINE - JUN '86
- #45: ATARI USER GROUPS
- #47: INSOFT MAGAZINE - JUL '86

Music Files

- #10: MIDT DEMO SONGS
- #32: SOUND AND GRAPHICS DEMOS
- #34: MUSIC ON YOUR ST
- #50: GRAPHICS DEMOS NO. 3
- #60: MUSIC STUDIO SONGS
- #78: DIGI SOUND DEMO NO. 1 * <----- NEW
- #79: DIGI SOUND DEMO NO. 2 * <----- NEW

Picture Disks

- #1: MONOCHROME SLIDE SHOW NO. 1 (mono)
- #20: COLOR/MONO SLIDE SHOW.
- #40: TINY COLOR SLIDES NO. 1
- #41: TINY COLOR SLIDES NO. 2
- #42: TINY COLOR SLIDES NO. 3
- #48: TINY MONOCHROME SLIDES NO. 1 (mono)
- #51: TINY COLOR SLIDES NO. 4
- #52: TINY COLOR SLIDES NO. 5
- #65: TINY COLOR SLIDES NO. 6
- #75: TINY COLOR SLIDES NO. 7

Telecommunications

- #4: ST TERMINAL PROGRAMS
- #43: TERMINAL PROGRAMS NO. 2
- #84: ST-TERM 2.1 DEMO DISK <----- NEW

Utilities

- #11: RAMDISKS & ONE MEG DOCS
- #18: ST UTILITY PROGRAMS
- #25: DEGAS UTILITY DISK
- #30: UTILITY DISK NO. 2
- #36: DESK ACCESSORIES
- #59: VIP TEMPLATES
- #61: PRINTER DRIVERS
- #63: UTILITY DISK NO. 3
- #72: UTILITY DISK NO. 4
- #73: UTILITY DISK NO. 5
- #81: UTILITY DISK NO. 6 <----- NEW

* Requires one meg.

ATARI USERS REGIONAL ASSOCIATION

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Meetings: 1st Thursday, 7:00 pm (Library Activities),
7:30-9:00 pm (Program) in the Temple Israel Social Hall.
Temple Israel is located in Silver Spring, at 420 E.
University Blvd, between Colesville Rd (Route 29) and
PIney Branch Rd (Route 320).

President's Report: We will meet on the 13th of November at Temple Israel. Note that this is the second Thursday. Our December meeting will be on the first Thursday.

Lincoln Hallen's Flea Market has become a very successful feature of our meetings. Lincoln's number is listed above. Call him if you want to try to turn some of your "old gold" into ready cash.

Nominations - We need to present a slate of officers for the elections to be held at our December meeting. AURA needs some new blood in the officer ranks. Some of the people who have served us so ably in the past would like to move on to other things. Please contact John Barnes if you would like to help keep AURA running.

ATARIFEST - Plans for AURA's participation in the ATARIFEST at Fairfax High School are pretty firm. AURA will host workshops on "personal Productivity" for both 8-bit and 16-bit machines. We interpret this to include word processing, spreadsheets, and database management. We will also have offerings from our 8-bit and 16-bit libraries. Additional details on the Fest are elsewhere in this issue of Current Notes. I am sure that we can make good use of additional volunteers. Please contact me if you can possibly help.

Univ of Md Computer Fair - By the time you read this the University of Maryland Computerfest will be past history. We will report in detail on AURA's participation next month.

AURA meeting Place - I have investigated an American Legion Hall and I am working on a Masonic Temple as a possible new meeting site. The American Legion Hall is significantly more expensive than Temple Israel. If you have any contacts with an organization that would let us rent their social hall for \$100 or thereabouts per occasion, please let me know. I find it difficult to plan a yearly program when we can expect to lose (or reschedule) several meetings because of schedule conflicts.

November program - Bill Schadt tells me that our November meeting will feature a demonstration of intercomputer communications. Matt Singer, developer of Forem ST, is expected, along with John Antoniades to demonstrate ANS Igraph. We will also have a tutorial on managing your ST desktop.

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Meetings: 4th Tuesday, 7 - 9:30 pm, Walkersville H. S.,
MD Route 194, 1 mile north of MD Route 26 (Liberty Road).
Dues are \$20/year/family. Join at meeting or send check,
payable to FACE, to Buddy Smallwood, P.O. Box 300,
Keedysville, MD 21756.

Secretary's Report: At the October meeting our users group enjoyed a demonstration of the 288/327K memory modification for the 800 and 130XE computers presented by Bob Martin. David Karstaedt then demonstrated the graphic adventure game WIZARD'S CROWN. We also had a dress rehearsal of the various talking programs and accessories we will be showing at the ATARIFEST on November 8th.

Our November meeting will be held on November 25th, and we will have side-by-side demonstrations of the 8-bit and 16-bit golf game LEADERBOARD presented by Buddy Smallwood and Chris Bigelow. Buddy also plans to demonstrate the new 16-bit STARRAIDERS.

NATIONAL CAPITAL ATARI USERS' GROUP

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Vice President... Mike Pollak..... 703-768-7669
Treasurer..... Allen H. Lerman.. 703-460-0289
XL/XE Librarian.. Mike Pollak..... 703-768-7669

Meetings: 3rd Tuesday, 5:30 - 8:30 pm, room 543, National Science Foundation offices, 1800 G St., NW, Washington, DC. Closest subway stop is Farragut West on the Blue and Orange lines. Building is identified by sign for Madison National Bank on the corner. Front entrance is on west side of 18th between F and G. New members may join at meeting or send \$15 check, payable to NCAUG, to Allen Lerman, 14905 Waterway Drive, Rockville, MD 20853.

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Special Interest Groups

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ST SIG..... see VAST
TELECOM SIG..... Dick Knisely (703) 476-0529

***** Please do not call after 10 PM EDT *****

L. MOUNTAIN MAIN MEETING Page 1 of 14

NOVATARI MAIN Meeting is held at the Washington Gas Light Building, 6801 Industrial Road, Springfield, VA (normally the 2nd Sunday of the month). Take 495 to East on Braddock (620) to South on Backlick (617). Left on Industrial Road (by a light with a Texaco station on the corner). Washington Gas Light is the second building on the right (big parking lot, go right in front door).

big auditorium

5:30 - 6:00	BEGINNERS SIG
6:00 - 7:00	speaker
7:00 - 7:30	business and Open Forum
7:30 - 8:30	8-bit SIG (IF someone volunteers to run it)

small auditorium

5:30 - 6:00	TELECOM SIG
7:30 - 8:30	ST SIG

ST SIG also meets at Washington Gas Light from 5:30 - 9:30 on the fourth Sunday of the month.

LOCAL NOVATARI CHAPTERS

BURKE meets at the Oaks Community Center from 7:30 - 9:30 on the third Sunday of each month. Contact Ray Cwallina (250-3856).

GREENBRIAR meets at Computer Service Land, 14506-B Lee Road, Chantilly, VA from 7:30 - 9:30 on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Contact Jim Stevenson (378-4093).

MT VERNON / HYBLA VALLEY meets the first Thursday of each month at 7:30. Contact Ron Peters at 780-0963.

STERLING meets in the Sterling Community Center Annex from 7:30 - 10:00 on the first Thursday of the month.

VIENNA meets in room 10 at the Vienna Elementary School, T28 Center St. SW from 7:30 - 9:00 on the third Wednesday of the month. Contact Dave Heagy at 281-9226.

Membership Dues are \$15/year which includes a subscription to CURRENT NOTES. You may join at the main meeting, any chapter meeting or by sending \$15, payable to NOVATARI, to Earl Lilley, 821 Ninovan Road SE, Vienna, VA 22180.

President's Report: My thanks to John Hansen of Disk Publications, Inc. who came to our October meeting to talk about the "New Aladdin" magazine on a disk. The publication makes great use of the 8-bit graphics. This non-technical publication should be available for the ST later this year. (The Atari 8-bit machines are the only 8-bit machines that will be supported by the publication.)

Those of you that access ARMUDIC know that as of the first of this month that it no longer is free. Also, it has been opened to the other clubs at a slightly higher annual fee. The annual fee for NOVATARI members is \$5. The dues/fee were installed for several reasons. First, there was the loss of the equipment from the lightning strike. Second, a way to provide for some of the maintenance and upgrading of ARMUDIC. Third, a means of cutting down on the traffic that occurs on BBS's open to the public. And then there was the desire to provide a place for the members of all the local clubs to coordinate events and exchange ideas. As we already have an ST BBS, ARMUDIC's files and message bases will be for the 8-bit machines. The fees have been set at a level that should help defray the costs of keeping up the BBS but is not likely to make the BBS's pay for themselves. Many thanks go to the Bell family for running both BBS'. Guest privileges are essentially nil on both BBS' due to abuse of that option. Information on dues for non-NOVATARI WAACE members is on both BBS's. (I should

mention that BOTH BBSs now have their own 20 meg hard drive.)

I will be moving in the latter part of November. I will place my new number on ARMUDIC and the ST BBS when I get it as I will still be in the area. The NOVATARI officers will be meeting this month to select a nominating committee. Right now it looks like there will be a new structure for next year: President, Vice-President for 8-bit (this will be the head of the 8-bit SIG), Vice-President for 16-bit (this will be the head of the ST SIG). I will not be running for re-election as is the case with a couple other officers. It would be advisable for some people to step forward now to keep things running smoothly.

And, finally, don't forget ATARIFEST on November 8. Since ATARIFEST is the day before the November Novatari meeting would normally be scheduled, it takes the place of our November meeting. NOVATARI will be hosting the 8-bit Game room, the Telecommunications room, the MIDI room, the ST Languages room. See you all there!

>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

Virginia ST User's Group

President.....	Joe Kuffner....	(703) 759-2507
Demo Volunteers..	Evan Wallace...	(703) 620-9144
Disk Librarian...	Allen Clarke...	(703) 250-4469
Equipment Coord..	Ian Charters...	(703) 845-7576
Public Relations	Gary Scott.....	(703) 590-1906
MIDI Keyboard....	Mike Lehr.....	(703) 931-9947
Programmer's SIG.	Ken Whitesell....	(301) 636-4756
WAACE ST BBS.....	WAACE ST BBS.....	(703) 569-3227

IMPORTANT NOTE: NO Second Sunday Meeting this Month. The VaST normally meets on the second and fourth Sunday of each month in the Washington Gas & Light Building (See NOVATARI report for directions). However, due to ATARIFEST '86, no meeting on November 9th. Next meeting is 23 November. Normal meeting times as follows:

Second Sunday: 7:30 until 9:30 in small auditorium
 Fourth Sunday: Programmer's SIG - 5:30 until 6:30
 VaST Meeting - 6:30 until 9:30

President's Report: Major news this month is still the upcoming Atarifest '86, November 8th at the Fairfax High School. We have many volunteers, but as usual, more are required. See the article elsewhere in this issue on whom to contact to offer your support. As usual, too, you may contact any of the VaST officers above.

The 4th Sunday meeting of September was very successful and entertaining. Representatives were on hand from Michtron, Mr. Gordon Monnier, and from Andromeda Software, Mr. Steven Friedman. Steve gave us a demonstration of products soon to be released from other software publishing houses, including: BATTLE ZONE (an interactive tank battle simulation), MOON PATROL (much like the 8-bit version), MILLIPEDE (an arcade clone), MISSILE COMMAND (per the 8-bit & arcade game classic), INTERNATIONAL KARATE (an interactive karate match), ART & FILM DIRECTOR (animation construction utilities), and KEMPELE CHESS (named after the 19th century chess "machine").

Steve gave a brief presentation on his Hungarian firm's programming direction as well as some insights on how to "sell" your products to publishers. Other products that they are considering for development are: 1000 x 1000 graphics tablet and a Video-taper and editor for creating your own animated tapes.

Gordon Monnier gave us some background on his company, Michtron. New products to be released shortly include: FINANCIAL FUTURE (an investment/finance utility), 8-BALL

(a pool simulation), PINBALL FACTORY (a pinball table construction utility), and VIVA (a laser disk controller - i.e. Dragon's Lair). All in all, it was an enjoyable visit, and I wish to express my thanks for their attendance and presentations. Thanks go to Joe Waters, too, for his arrangements.

The 2nd Sunday meeting in October had a general speaker on the New Aladdin, a disk based computer magazine. The ST version will begin distribution in January, '87. Keep an eye out for it! Another interesting event at this meeting was Ted Bell's analysis on the Atari Corp. stock offering. Stocks are being sold through Palme-Weber. Give them a call for a prospectus. Bottom Line: Go with your heart on this one. Stock will be offered at approximately \$11-13 on opening some time in November. Best of luck to Atari.

Remember, due to ATARIFEST, there will be no 2nd Sunday VaST meeting in November. (We expect that you all will be "Computered out" after Saturday's show). There'll definitely be a VaST meeting on the 4th Sunday. Until next time, head down to your local ST store. I think within the latest rush of new software, you'll find something you like. We'll see you at ATARIFEST '86!

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E.A.S.T.: EASTERN ATARI ST USERS

President..... John Kuehn..... (301) 460-0108

Meetings: 4th Thursday, 7:00-???, Twinbrook Library In Montgomery County at Viers Mill road at Twinbrook Parkway. The meeting room has its own exit and thus meetings are not limited to library hours.

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President.....	Sam Schriner.....	301-843-7916
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Treasurer.....	Bob Barnett.....	301-934-2617
Disk Librarian...	Jim Sanner.....	301-884-5840

Meetings: 2nd Thursday, 7:30 pm, John Hanson Middle School In Waldorf, MD. Take MD Route #5, proceed about 1/2 mile East of the intersection of Route 301 and take the first left past the Kinney shoe store to the school. New members may join at the meeting or send \$15 check, payable to SMAUG, to Bob Barnett, P.O. Box 612, Waldorf, MD 20601.

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WOODBRIDGE ATARI COMPUTER USERS' GROUP

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VP-Liaison.....	Tim Mitchell.....	703-221-7722
Secretary.....	Bill Alger.....	703-455-9565
Treasurer.....	Curt Pieritz.....	703-494-3704
Librarian.....	Arnie Turk.....	703-670-2547
Past President...	Jack Holtzauer..	703-670-6475

Meetings: 3rd Tuesday, (EXCEPT for November 11 -- all 2nd Tuesday), 7 - 10 pm, Community Room, Potomac Branch, Prince William County Library, Opitz Blvd., Woodbridge, VA. Entering Woodbridge from either North or South on Route #1, proceed to the intersection of Route #1 and Opitz Blvd (adjacent to Woodbridge Lincoln-Mercury). Turn west on Opitz and take first left turn into the library's parking lot. The Community Room is located to your left immediately upon entering the main building. Membership fee is \$10/year plus \$1 monthly dues. Join at meeting or send check, payable to WACUG, to Bill Alger, 7792 Newington Woods Drive, Springfield, VA 22153.



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